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CONTEMPORARY PORTRAITS

SECOND SERIES

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FRANK HARRIS

CONTEMPORARY PORTRAITS

SECOND SERIES

By

FRANK HARRIS



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FOREWORD TO THE SECOND

SERIES OF PORTRAITS



LITERATURE learns so unwillingly from life that it is not surprising that it should learn so reluctantly from the methods of science and yet it might learn a good deal. For example, a biologist finds a new sort of bird, let us say, and sits down to describe it.

He is far more than impartial; he knows that his description must be so perfectly accurate that another biologist ten thousand miles away should be able to classify the bird from it as well as if he had the bird before him.

How many literary critics are there who reach such high detachment and show such scrupulous care?

The biologist knows, too, that length of feather or peculiarity of coloring is not so important as structural differences in the skeleton, or such organic modifications as will affect the creature's chances of surviving and propagating

his kind. Accordingly he is on the lookout for peculiarities in proportion to their vital importance to the race or species.

But what literary critic uses such an enduring standard of values?

And when the man of science approaches the chief part of his task he is even more careful: he must classify the specimen, decide what species it belongs to, and whether it is more nearly akin to this family or to that. A mistake here would expose him to the derision of every biologist in the world, whereas if he performs his work beyond possibility of fault-finding he will only have done what is expected of every competent craftsman.

When will literary criticism even seek to attain such excellence?

You have a Sainte Beuve comparing Flaubert with Madame Sand and Eugene Sue, regretting that the author of "Salambo" does not write so well as the author of "Mauprat," and that the creator of "Madame Bovary" has not such fertility of imagination as the author of "The Wandering Jew"!

Or your Sainte Beuve will tell you that Balzac's fame will be drowned in the sea of his impurities, that the most extraordinary specimen

of man it was ever the good fortune of a Frenchman to meet was so little out of the common that he was fated soon to be forgotten.

In much the same way your Matthew Arnold will call Byron a great poet and put him far above Heine and will condemn Keats for writing sensual letters to his love and for consequent "ill-breeding," apparently without even a suspicion that Keats is a greater poet than Milton and Heine incomparably the first of all the moderns. Yet Arnold as a poet should have known that the "Hyperion" is dowered with a richness of rhythm and a magnificence of music to which *Paradise Lost* can lay no claim; while Heine's position is beyond dispute.

But for brainless prejudice and shameful blundering that would ruin the reputation of any first year's student in biology, these so-called masters of literary criticism are not even blamed. And accordingly we find a Meredith at seventy declaring that his works have never been criticised, that no one in England has even tried to describe his productions fairly, much less classify him correctly.

While attempting to rival scientific exactitude and detached impartiality the literary critic has

still a further height to climb. His description may be exact, his classification fairly correct, yet we shall not be satisfied unless he reveals to us the ever-changing soul of his subject and its possibilities of growth. In this way art asserts its superiority to science.

When this ultimate domain is reached a new question imposes itself. The portrait painter is always drawn by two divergent forces; he must catch the likeness of his sitter and yet make his portrait a work of art.

This world-old dispute in portraiture between realism and art was settled for the artist by Michelangelo. Some one who watched him working on his great statue of Lorenzo dei Medici kept on objecting that it was not like Lorenzo, that he had known that great man for years, and that he would not have recognized him from the sculptor's presentment.

At length Michelangelo turned on his buzzing critic: "Who will care whether it's like him or not a thousand years hence?"

In other words, the obligation on the artist is to "produce a great work of art," and there is no other.

At the same time, the great portraits of the world such as the picture of Charles V. on horse-

back by Titian and the Meniñas of Velasquez and the Syndics of Rembrandt manage to reconcile to some extent both requirements.

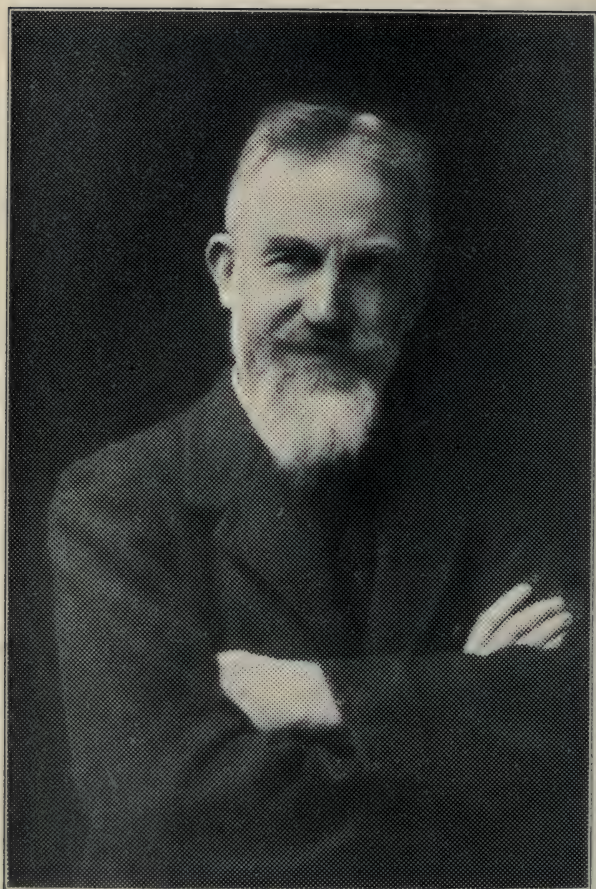
Likeness is caught most easily by exaggeration of characteristic features; but such exaggeration is apt to offend the modesty of truth and fall into caricature; whereas the work of art is always founded on truth as a beautiful figure demands a perfect skeleton, and any heightening even of the truth must have beauty or some strange and profound significance as justification. How far then is exaggeration or modification of the fact allowed? I solved the riddle rather loosely in my own way. When my subject is really a great man, a choice and master-spirit, I try to depict him in his habit as he lived with absolute fidelity to fact. In the case of Carlyle and Browning, Meredith, Burton and Davidson in my first volume of portraits, just as in the case of Shaw and Thomson and Walt Whitman in this volume, I have taken no liberties wittingly with the fact; the real is good enough for me when it is halo-crowned; but when I am dealing with smaller men whose growth has been dwarfed or warped or thwarted I permit myself a certain latitude of interpretation, or even of artistic presentment. Browning's Rabbi was right:

FOREWORD

"All I could never be,
All men ignored in me,
This was I worth to God whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

The artist must divine the secret nature and even the unconscious potentialities of his subject and bring them to expression or his work will not endure, and it is love alone that divines, love alone to which all possibilities are actualities and faults and vices merely shadows which outline and lift into relief the noble qualities.

It is by love that the artist reaches higher than the impartiality of the man of science and discovers the secrets of the spirit; love is the only key to personality and is as necessary to the artist as his breath. It is indeed the breath of the soul, the emanation which clothes Truth with the magical vestment of Beauty.



George Bernard Shaw

CONTEMPORARY PORTRAITS

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



ON QUIXOTE lived in an imaginary past; he cherished the beliefs and tried to realize the ideal, of an earlier age. Our modern Don Quixotes all live in the future and hug a belief of their own making, an ideal corresponding to their own personality.

Both the lovers of the past and the future, however, start by despising the present; they are profoundly dissatisfied with what is and in love with what has been or may be. The main difference between the rueful Knight and Bazarof is that the Don turns his back on the actual whereas the modern thinker seeks to end or mend existing conditions, and thus found a new civilization, the Kingdom of Man upon Earth.

Bernard Shaw is the best specimen of Bazarof that our time has seen; he is at once a greater force and more effective than his Russian prototype, for he attacks the faults of the established

order with humor, a weapon of divine temper and almost irresistibly effective.

But Shaw is more than an iconoclast.

His work as a dramatist is at least as important as his critical energy. In this respect I always think of him as a British Moliere gifted with as fine a wit as the great Frenchman and at least as wide a reach of thought. It is as a Bazarof-Moliere, and even something higher, that I wish to present him. More than once Shaw has played true prophet and guide and stood against the selfish policies and hypocrisies of his nation with high disregard of personal consequences. That he has not been imprisoned or banned or even persecuted is due to the fact that he is very English in many things and that his humor has saved him from being taken too seriously. Yet he deserves to be taken seriously, and I have put forth my high appreciation of him at the outset to induce my readers to reconsider this superficial impression of him.

It was in September, 1894, that I bought *The Saturday Review* and set myself to get the ablest men to write for it, careless what their opinions might be.

Most newspaper men in London had heard of G. B. S.: his initials stuck in the mind because they were the same, or very like, those given to a famous pipe and advertised till they had become a household word. George Bernard

Shaw profited by the coincidence. He made himself known as a journalist by his papers on music in *The Star*, a cheap Radical evening paper, and preached socialism to boot wherever he could get a hearing.

In 1892 he began writing for *The World*, a paper of some importance so long as its founder and editor, Edmund Yates, was alive. But Yates died six months or so before I bought *The Saturday Review*, and I knew that Shaw would resent the change. The idea of connecting Shaw the Socialist orator with the high Tory *Saturday Review* pleased me; the very incongruity tempted and his ability was beyond question. Now and again I had read his weekly articles on music and while admiring the keen insight of them and the satiric light he threw on pompous pretences and unrealities, I noticed that he had begun to repeat himself, as if he had said all he had to say on that theme.

What should I ask him to write about? What was his true vein? He had as much humor as Wilde—the name at once crystalized my feeling—that was what Shaw should do, I said to myself, write on the theatre; in essence his talent, like Wilde's, was theatrical, almost to caricature, certain, therefore, to carry across the footlights and have an immediate effect.

I wrote to him at once, telling him my opinion of his true talent and asking him to write a

weekly article for *The Saturday Review*.

He answered immediately; a letter somewhat after this fashion:

"How the Dickens you knew that my thoughts had been turning to the theater of late and that I'd willingly occupy myself with it exclusively for some time to come, I can't imagine. But you've hit the clout, as the Elizabethans used to say, and, if you can afford to pay me regularly, I'm your man so long as the job suits me and I suit the job. What can you afford to give?"

My answer was equally prompt and to the point:

"I can afford to give you so much a week, more, I believe, than you are now getting. If that appeals to you, start in at once; bring me your first article by next Wednesday and we'll have a final pow-wow."

On the Wednesday Shaw turned up with the article, and I had a good look at him and a long talk with him. Shaw at this time was nearing forty; very tall, over six feet in height and thin to angularity; a long bony face, corresponding, I thought, to a tendency to get to bedrock everywhere; rufous fair hair and long, untrimmed reddish beard; gray-blue English eyes with straight eyebrows tending a little upwards from the nose and thus adding a touch of Mephistophelian sarcasm to the alert, keen expression. He was dressed carelessly in tweeds with a

Jaeger flannel shirt and negligent tie; contempt of frills written all over him; his hands clean and well-kept, but not manicured. His complexion, singularly fair even for a man with reddish hair, seemed too bloodless to me, reminded me of his vegetarianism which had puzzled me more than a little for some time. His entrance into the room, his abrupt movements—as jerky as the ever-changing mind—his perfect unconstraint—all showed an able man, very conscious of his ability, very direct, very sincere, sharply decisive.

“I liked your letter,” Shaw began, “as I told you; the price, too, suits me for the moment; but—you won’t alter my articles, will you?”

“Not a word,” I said. “If I should want anything changed, which is most unlikely, I’d send you a proof and ask you to alter it; but that is not going to occur often. I like original opinions even though I don’t agree with them.”

After some further talk, he said:

“Very well then. If the money appears regularly you can count on me for a weekly outpouring. You don’t limit me in any way?”

“Not in any way,” I answered.

“Well, it seems to me that the new *Saturday Review* should make a stir.”

“After we’re all dead, not much before, but that doesn’t matter,” I replied. “I’ve asked all the reviewers only to review those books they

admire and can praise: starfinders they should be, not fault-finders."

"What'll the master of 'flouts and jeers' think?" asked Shaw. (Lord Salisbury, the bitter-tongued Prime Minister, had been a constant contributor to *The Saturday Review* twenty years before, and was understood still to take an interest in his old journal.)

"I don't know and I don't care," I replied; and our talk came to an end.

Shaw was a most admirable contributor, always punctual unless there was some good reason for being late; always scrupulous, correcting his proofs heavily, with rare conscientiousness, and always doing his very best.

I soon realized that the drama of the day had never been so pungently criticized; I began to compare Shaw's articles with the *Dramaturgie* of Lessing, and it was Shaw who gained by the comparison.

His critical writing was exactly like his speaking and indeed like his creative dramatic work; very simple, direct and lucid, clarity and sincerity his characteristics. No pose, no trace of affectation; a man of one piece, out to convince not to persuade; a bare logical argument lit up by gleams of sardonic humor; humor of the head as a rule and not of the heart. His writing seemed artless, but there is a good deal of art in his plays and art too, can be discovered both

in his speaking and in his critical work, but whether there is enough art to serve as a prophylactic against time, remains to be seen.

His seriousness, sincerity and brains soon brought the actor-managers out in arms against him. Naturally they did not condemn his writing, but his dress and behaviour. Two or three of them told me at various times that Shaw was impossible.

"He often comes to the theatre in ordinary dress," said one, "and looks awful."

"You ought to thank your stars that he goes to your theatre at all," I replied. "I certainly shall not instruct him how to clothe himself."

"What I object to," said another, "is that he laughs in the wrong place. It is dreadful when a favorite actor is saying something very pathetic or sentimental to see a great figure in gray stretch himself out in the front stalls and roar with laughter."

"I know," I replied grinning, "and the worst of it is that all the world laughs with Shaw when he shows it the unconscious humor of your performance."

An amusing incident closed this controversy. One night a manager told Shaw he could not go into the stalls in that dress. Shaw immediately began to take off his coat.

"No, no," cried the actor-manager; "I mean you must dress like other people."

Shaw glanced at the rows of half-dressed women: "I'm not going to take off my shirt," he exclaimed, "in order to be like your clients," and forthwith left the house.

The dispute had one good result. Shaw asked me to buy his tickets. "I hate the whole practice of complimentary tickets," he said. "It is intended to bind one to praise and I resent the implied obligation."

Of course, I did as he wished and there the trouble ended.

At rare intervals I had to tell Shaw his article was too long and beg him to shorten it. For months together I had nothing to do except congratulate myself on having got him as a contributor; though at first he was strenuously objected to by many of my readers who wrote begging me to cancel their subscriptions or at least to cease from befouling their houses with "Shaw's socialistic rant and theatric twaddle."

An incident or two in the four years' companionship may be cited, for they show, I think, the real Shaw. William Morris, the poet and decorator-craftsman, died suddenly. Shaw called just to tell me he'd like to write a special article on Morris, as a socialist and prose-writer and speaker. I said I'd be delighted, for Arthur Symons was going to write on his poetry and Cunninghame Graham on his funeral. I hoped to have three good articles. When they arrived,

I found that Symons was very good indeed and so was Shaw; but Cunninghame Graham had written a little masterpiece, a gem of restrained yet passionate feeling: absolute realistic description lifted to poetry by profound emotion.

Shaw came blown in on the Monday full of unaffected admiration.

"What a story that was of Graham's!" he cried, "a great writer, isn't he?"

I nodded: "An amateur of genius: it's a pity he hasn't to earn his living by his pen."

"A good thing for us," cried Shaw, "he'd wipe the floor with us all if he often wrote like that."

I only relate the happening to show Shaw's unaffected sincerity and outspoken admiration of good work in another man.

I came to regard him as a realist by nature, who, living in the modern realistic current, was resolved to be taken simply for what he was and what he could do, and equally resolved to judge all other men and women by the same relentless positive standard. This love of truth for its own sake, truth beyond vanity or self-praise, is a product of the modern scientific spirit and appears to me to embody one of the loftiest ideals yet recorded among men.

It marks, indeed, the coming of age of the race and is a sign that we have done with childish make-believes. From this time on we shall turn our daily job into the great adventure and

make of its perfecting our life's romance. Shaw's realism, his insistence on recognizing only real values was so intense that it called forth one of Oscar Wilde's finest epigrams:

"Shaw," he said, "hasn't an enemy in the world and none of his friends like him."

One can hardly help asking: how did Shaw grow to this height so early?

It was always evident to me that by some happy fortune Shaw had escaped the English public school and its maiming deforming influence. His view of life and men and women was too true, too unconventional, too bold, ever to have come into contact even with the poisonous atmosphere of Eton or Harrow or the like. Where had he been educated? was a question always on the tip of my tongue.

"I am an educated man," he replied, "because I escaped from school at fourteen, and before that was only a day-boy who never wasted the free half of my life in learning lessons or reading schoolbooks."

A little later he wrote to me with the same understanding:

"I come of a Protestant family of true-blue garrison snobs, but before I was ten years of age I got into an atmosphere of freedom of thought, of anarchic revolt against conventional assumptions of all kinds, utterly incompatible with the generalized concept of an Irish Protestant

family. I was forbidden nothing and spared nothing. My maternal uncle, clever and literate, was an abyss of blasphemy and obscenity.

"My mother, brought up with merciless strictness by a rich hunchbacked aunt to be a perfect lady, and disinherited furiously by her for being (consequently) ignorant enough of the world to marry my father, had such a horror of her own training that she left her children without any training at all.

"My humorous father, a sort of mute inglorious Charles Lamb, who disgusted my mother by his joyless furtive drinking and his poverty and general failure, could no more control me than he could avoid being thrust into the background by an energetic man of genius (an orchestral conductor and teacher of singing) into whose public work my mother threw herself when he taught her to sing, and who made life possible for her by coming to live with us. This man's hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him. He had his own method of singing and everyone else's was murderously wrong. He would not hear of doctors; when my mother had a dangerous illness he took the case in hand, and when he at last allowed my father to call in an eminent physician, the e. p. looked at my mother and said: 'My work has already been done.' He was equally contemptuous of the church,

though he could conduct Beethoven's Mass in C. better than his pious rivals. He had no time to read anything, and took Tyndall on Sound to bed with him every night for years (he slept badly) without ever getting to the end of it. There was no sex in the atmosphere; it was never discussed or even thought about as far as I could see; you had only to hear my mother sing Mendelsohn's "Hear My Prayer," or even listen to one note of her voice to understand that she might have been the centre of a *menage a mille et trois* without an atom of scandal sticking to her no matter how hard it was thrown. You will see that my circumstances were quite unusual and that nobody could possibly deduce them from general data."

This bringing up under a man of genius explains Shaw's unhindered, natural growth and he went on to indicate how his musical training in youth helped his development:

"The great difficulty of dealing with my education lies in the fact that my culture was so largely musical. It will be admitted that no one without as much familiarity with the masterpieces of music as with those of literature could write adequately about Wagner. But the same thing is true of me. You cannot account for me by saying that I was steeped in Dickens, or even later in Moliere. I was steeped in Mozart, too; it was from him that I learned

how art work could reach the highest degree of strength, refinement, beauty and seriousness without being heavy and portentous. Shelley made a great impression on me; I read him from beginning to end, prose and verse, and held him quite sacred in my adolescence. But Beethoven and early Wagner were at work alongside him.

"Then there was science in which I have never lost my interest. I even claim to have made certain little contributions to the theory of Creative Evolution (which is my creed: you can compare the third Act of Man and Superman with Bergson's treatise).

"Socialism sent me to economics, which I worked at for four years until I mastered it completely, only to find, of course, that none of the other socialists had taken that trouble. I do not read any foreign language easily without the dictionary except French. I have a sort of acquaintance with Italian, mostly operatic; and you could not put a German document into my hands without some risk of my being able to understand it; but what you call knowing a language; that is, something more than being able to ask the way to the Bahnhof or the Duomo, puts me out of court as a linguist. As to Latin on which all my schooling was supposed to be spent, I cannot read an epitaph or a tag from Horace without stumbling. Naturally I make

use of translations and musical settings. I know Faust and the Niblung's Ring as well as the Germans know Shakespeare. I am very unteachable and could not pass the fourth standard examination in an elementary school—not that anybody else could; but still you know what I mean."

Shaw's explanation is fairly complete; only a man of genius could see himself from the outside with this impartiality. Yet he leaves out of the account the influence exercised on him, perhaps unconsciously, by the Irish atmosphere so to speak, during his formative years. The ordinary Celtic view of England constitutes no small part of Shaw's originality; for the habit of judging another people from the outside, so to speak, while living amongst them, is a spiritual gymnastic, a mental training of the highest value.

Shaw himself has told how he became interested in Shakespeare through meeting Thomas Tyler and hearing his explanation of the story told in the Sonnets, and this study, no doubt, helped him in his evolution from Bazarof to Moliere and incidentally led to my first difference with him. I must touch on this now for nowhere, save perhaps in love, and but little is known even by his intimates of Shaw's amorous experiences, does a man reveal his true nature more ingeniously than in a quarrel or dispute.

One day in *The Saturday Review* office I got a letter from a friend of very considerable ability, begging me not to let Shaw go on "writing drivel about Shakespeare; on his own job he's good, but why let him talk rot?" I had noticed Shaw's divagations; but he used Shakespeare like the British use the ten commandments as a shillelagh, and as Shaw took the great dramatist generally to point unconventional morals, I didn't wish to restrain him. But one day his weekly paper was chiefly about Shakespeare, and he fell into two or three of the gross common blunders on the subject: notably, in one passage, he assumed that Shakespeare had been a good husband—the usual English misconception.

I wrote to him at once:

"You are writing so brilliantly on the weekly theater-happenings, why on earth drag in Shakespeare always like King Charles's head, as you know nothing about him." I got an answer by return:

"What in thunder do you mean by saying I know nothing of Shakespeare? I know more about the immortal Will than any living man," and so forth and so on.

I replied:

"Come to lunch one day at the Cafe Royal and I'll give you the weeds and the water your soul desires and prove into the bargain that you know nothing whatever about Shakespeare."

When we had ordered our lunch Shaw began :

"Who's going to be the judge between us, Frank Harris, on this Shakespeare matter?"

"You, Shaw, only you," I replied, "I am to convince you of your complete and incredible ignorance."

He snorted: "Then you have your work cut out; we can't sleep here, can we?"

"The time it will take," I retorted, "depends on your intelligence—that's what I'm reckoning on."

"Humph!" he grunted disdainfully. We had our meal and then went at it hammer and tongs.

"You believe," I began, "that because Shakespeare left Stratford after being married a couple of years and did not return for eleven years, he loved his wife?"

"No, no," replied Shaw, "I said in my article that in his will he left his wife 'the second-best bed' as a pledge of his affection. I remember reading once something that convinced me of this; I don't recall the argument now; but at the time it convinced me and I can look it up for you if you like."

"You needn't," I replied, "I'll give it you; it's probably the old professorial explanation: the best bed in those days was in the guest room; therefore the second-best bed was the one Shakespeare slept in with his wife."

"That's it," cried Shaw, "that's it, and it is convincing. How do you meet it?"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" I replied. "Here's Shakespeare, the most articulate creature that ever lived, the greatest lord of language in recorded time, unable in his will to express a passionate emotion so as to be understood. Why, had he even written 'our bed, dear,' as the common grocer would have done, we'd all have known what he meant. Shakespeare could never write 'the second-best bed' without realizing the sneer in the words and intending us to realize it as well. Besides ——"

"Good God," interrupted Shaw, throwing up his hand to his forehead impatiently, "of course not; how stupid of me! Confound the mandarins and their idiot explanations!"—and after a pause: "I'll give you the second-best bed; I'm prepared to believe that Shakespeare did not love his wife. Go ahead with your other proofs of my ignorance."

At five that afternoon we left the table, Shaw declaring he would never write again about Shakespeare if I'd write about him.

On that, I began my articles on Shakespeare, which afterwards grew into books; but Shaw has not kept his vow. He has written again and again on the subject and always with a bias, being more minded to realize Shaw than Shakespeare. But ever since that talk he has shown cordial appreciation of my work on the subject.

By dwelling on this Shakespeare difference I merely wish to show that Shaw, like most very able men, was loath to admit that after he had studied a subject he had by no means exhausted it. (Some people seem to think that by telling this story I am trying to show my superiority over Shaw. The idea is absurd. Mere knowledge gives no superiority. Shaw would have had me at an even greater disadvantage if the subject had been Beethoven or Debussy).

His stubbornness in this matter showed me a side of Shaw I had not noticed; it seemed to me very English, I don't know why; but from this time on I became conscious that Shaw was characteristically English. He was reluctant to admit Shakespeare's gentleness and his abandonment to passion; the fact that the loss of the woman he loved embittered him and turned him from a writer of comedies and histories into a writer of tragedies, degraded him in Shaw's opinion and thus made me conscious of a British hardness in Shaw which came, I thought, from want of passion, from lack of feeling. Shaw was, too, always impatient of weakness and of parasites—anything but a lover of the under-dog. I grew to think of him as a little obstinate, English in mind and not Celtic at all. He did not change his intellectual beliefs as readily as the Irish do, and he did not really admire the

Irish ideal of life: its amiability and happy-go-lucky-ness did not attract him.

He underrated the enduring fascination of this reckless wastrel type. Yet in one generation the dour Cromwellian veterans planted in Ireland all yielded to the charm of the Irish nature and became as the saying went, more Irish than the Irish themselves. Even if one prefers the English rose to any other flower, still one may admire the bravery of daffodils dancing naked in the wind, or the magic of bluebells blushing in the copses. There is room surely in God's garden for every variety of flower.

In the Boer war to the amazement of most of his admirers Shaw declared himself on the side of the British, and though he explained his position with perfect sincerity, he only convinced us that Briton-like he mistook English imperialism for the cause of humanity. Here is his defence: to some it may appear satisfying.

"In the South African business I was not a pro-Boer," he writes. "I never got over Olive Schreiner's 'Story of an African Farm.' Some few years before the war Cronwright Schreiner came to London. I asked him why he and Joubert and the rest put up with Kruger and his obsolete theocracy. He said they knew all about it and deplored it, but that the old man would die presently and then Krugerism would be quietly dropped and a liberal regime introduced. I suggested that it might be dangerous to wait;

but it was evident that Oom Paul was too strong for them. During the war a curious thing happened in Norway. There as in Germany everyone took it for granted that the right side was the anti-English side. Suddenly Ibsen asked in his grim manner: 'Are we really on the side of Mr. Kruger and his Old Testament?' The effect was electrical. Norway shut up. I felt like Ibsen.

"I was, of course, not in the least taken in by the *Times* campaign, though I defended the *Times* against the accusation of bribery on the ground that it was not necessary to pay the *Times* to do what it was only too ready to do for nothing. But I saw that Kruger meant the XVII Century and the Scottish XVII. at that; and so to my great embarrassment, I found myself on the side of the mob when you and Chesterton and John Burns and Lloyd George were facing the music. It is astonishing what bad company advanced views may get one into."

That Shaw could be persuaded by this remark of Ibsen strikes me as characteristic; the English view of things appeals to him all too readily.

His championing of the English cause in the Boer war made him very popular with the vast majority of the nation.

"A good deal of common sense in Shaw," was the general verdict, and accordingly when he spoke and wrote for the fellaheen in Egypt in

the Denshaw affair he was easily forgiven, for in time of need he had been on the popular, English side.

Again and again I shall have to show that this Bazarof, like Moliere, is full of the milk of human kindness.

Towards the end of my tenure of *The Saturday Review*, Shaw was making a great deal of money by his plays, thanks mainly I believe to their extraordinary vogue in the United States.

Casually he told me one day that every article he wrote for me cost him much more than he got for it.

"I mean," he said, "the same time spent on a comedy would pay me ten times as much. I'm losing \$500 a week at least through writing for you."

"You must stop writing for me then," I said, ruefully. "But I'm about to sell the paper, and if you could have kept on for a couple of months, say till September (it was then July or August if I remember rightly), I'd be greatly obliged."

"Say no more," he exclaimed. "I'll go on till your reign comes to an end."

"It's very good of you," I replied; "but I hardly like to accept such a sacrifice from you."

"I look upon it as only fair," he replied. "Your bringing me to *The Saturday Review* to write on the theatre did me a great deal of good in many ways. You not only made me better

known, but forced me to concentrate on the theatre and playwriting, and so helped me to success. It's only fair I should pay you back a part of what you helped me to earn."

"If you look at it like that," I replied, "I have no objection. You are making a lot of money then by your plays?"

"Not in England," he said, "but in America more than I can spend. My banker smiles now when he sees me, and is in a perpetual state of wonderment, for miracle on miracle, a writer is not only making money, but saving it."

Some time before this Shaw had married and had taken to wife, as he said himself, a lady who was "more than self-supporting." Consequently he found himself in 1898 much better than well off, freed from all sordid care. The first part of his life, the struggle of it, came thus to an end.

Shaw's apprenticeship as Goethe calls it, was now over and done with. He had reached the point where he began to produce as a master and show his true being. There will be nothing novel in his growth, nothing that should surprise us; he develops normally, naturally, and his life's history is to be found in his works.

Without dissecting his plays—*The Devil's Disciple*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, and best of all, I think, *Candida*, I have to notice a certain limitation in Shaw, peculiarly British, which discovered itself in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

There is no excuse for founding a play on this subject unless you are minded to amend or overthrow the conventional standpoint. If you only mean to affirm and defend it, why touch the ~~fession~~ get a hint of the truth, they don't even scabrous subject at all? The conventions of this world are surely strong enough without being buttressed by the Bernard Shaws. As soon as the hero and heroine of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* get a hint of the truth, they don't even verify it, but both drop all thought of marriage and bow before the conventional ideal, whereas one expects the hero at least to struggle and revolt. But the conventional reading of the matter is peculiarly British, and Shaw's tame conformity here shows that his interest in sex-questions is very slight, to say the best for it.

It is a peculiar dominance of mind over heart and over body, a rooted preference in Shaw for reflections and ideas with a contempt of sensations and even emotions that gives the Mephistophilian cast to his personality. His excessive preoccupation with the play of mind often hurts his dramatic writing. For instance, in *The Devil's Disciple*, after *Arms and the Man* probably his most popular play, Dick Dudgeon and Parson Anderson and even General Burgoyne are not differentiated in character; they are all Shaw. In the second act Parson Anderson exclaims "Minister be faugh!" as if he were the Devil's Disciple, and Burgoyne sneers at the

marksmanship of the British army and talks about "our enemies in London—Jobbery and Snobbery, incompetence and Red Tape," exactly as Shaw talks, in and out of season.

This onesidedness or predominance of intellect over heart and body, leads directly to the root-fact of Shaw's nature.

Very early in our acquaintance I had been surprised by one thing in him. The hero of one of his first books had been a prizefighter; Shaw made him very strong whereas most prizefighters are like Fitzsimmons, ape-armed, but not muscular. Shaw's extravagant ill-placed admiration of strength had stuck in my mind. I soon found out that he was never physically strong; he told me one day that his work often exhausted him so that he was fain to go into a dark room and lie flat on his back on the bare floor, every muscle relaxed, for hours, just to rest. The confession surprised me, for in the prime of life the ordinary man does not get tired out in this way.

A certain weakness of body in Shaw was sufficient to explain his undue admiration of the prizefighter's strength and his own vegetarianism and other idiosyncracies. But if asked why he abjures meat Shaw retorts that flesh-eating is an unhealthy practice and that the strongest animals such as the bull and the elephant are strict vegetarians; but that hardly satisfies one. The

truth, I think, is that the physical delicacy in Shaw detaches him from the common run of men whose appetites are gross and insistent. This comparative weakness of the body, too, allows his brain to act undisturbed and thus his appeal strikes one as peculiarly intellectual; as thin, so to speak, or at least thin-blooded.

If one thinks of his *Caesar and Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the enormous difference between the two men becomes manifest. Shakespeare's play is extraordinarily full-blooded and passionate; he is over-sexed, one would say, and this full tide of lust in him shows not only in his hero's insane abandonment to his passion, but also in the superb richness of language and glow of imagery. His intellect is implicit, showing mainly in side figures such as Caesar and Enobarbus and in regal magnificence of phrase:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety; other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
Become themselves in her.

Shaw's work in comparison is thin and bloodless; intellectually very interesting, but the coloring is subdued; it is all in cool grays and black shadows like a Whistler or Franz Hals in his old age.

When I ventured to hint this somewhere, Shaw repelled the charge very vigorously. He

was astonished, he said, to find me falling into such an error, and he goes on:

"Archer says 'Shaw's plays reek with sex' and he was right.

"I have shown by a whole series of stage couples how the modern man has become a philanderer like Goethe and how the modern woman has had to develop an aggressive strategy to counter his attempts to escape from his servitude to her. . . .

"In the tiny one act farcial comedy I published the other day, I put the physical act of sexual intercourse on the stage.

"Of course, I have to be like all live writers in constant reaction against the excesses of my time. . . . The infatuated amorism of the nineteenth century made it necessary for me to say with emphasis that life and not love is the supreme good. . . .

"To conclude with a curious observation, though poverty and fastidiousness prevented me from having a concrete love affair until I was twenty-nine, the five novels I wrote before that (novels were the only wear then) show much more knowledge of sex than most people seem to acquire after bringing up a family of fifteen."

Shaw was "on his own" in London at twenty; for nine years, then, he was an ascetic; would the ordinary man have been able to make the same boast after nine months or even weeks? I

am very sure Shakespeare could not. Shaw's defence seems to me to corroborate my view of his comparative indifference to sex.

Naturally Shaw regards his aloofness from sex-intoxication as a positive virtue, and he argues the matter very ably in his preface to his "Plays for Puritans," in which he asserts that his picture of Caesar is better than Shakespeare's. He says:

"I have a technical objection to making sexual infatuation a tragic theme. Experience proves that it is only effective in the comic spirit. We can bear to see Mrs. Quickly pawning her plates for love of Falstaff, but not Antony running away from the battle of Actium for love of Cleopatra. Let realism have its demonstration, comedy its criticism, or even bawdry its horse-laugh at the expense of sexual infatuation, if it must; but to ask us to subject our souls to its ruinous glamor, to worship it, deify it, and imply that it alone makes our life worth living, is nothing but folly gone mad erotically—a thing compared to which Falstaff's unbeglamored drinking and drabbing is respectable and right-minded. Whoever, then, expects to find Cleopatra a Circe and Caesar a hog in these pages, had better lay down my book and be spared a disappointment.

"In Caesar, I have used another character with which Shakespeare has been beforehand.

But Shakespeare, who knew human weaknesses so well, never knew human strength of the Caesarian type."

And he goes on:

"Caesar was not in Shakespeare, nor in the epoch, now fast waning, which he inaugurated. It cost Shakespeare no pang to write Caesar down for the merely technical purpose of writing Brutus up. And what a Brutus! A perfect Girondin."

Much of this is excellent criticism, but it does not do justice to Shakespeare. Shaw's Caesar is Bernard Shaw and his contempt for Cleopatra's wiles is very amusing and his intellectual appreciation of his position and his duties is quite admirable, but I do not find in Shaw's Caesar either the ruthlessness of the Roman or the will power and dignity of the world conqueror. Plutarch's Caesar gives us a far better picture of the man. Who can ever forget young Caesar dominating the pirates and daring to tell the chief to his face that he would hang him after paying him his ransom. I find more of the real Caesar in Shakespeare than in Shaw. When Antony challenges Caesar to fight his answer is soul-revealing:

"Let the old ruffian know
I have many other ways to die; meantime
Laugh at his challenge."

The master of the world has nothing but dis-

dain for the "sworder." And when his deserted sister weeps and he has to tell her that Antony has gone back to the serpent of old Nile, he adds:

"Cheer your heart. . . .
But let determin'd things to destiny
Hold unbewail'd their way."

There is no line in all literature with so much of Rome's majestic domination in it.

Greatness of insight and of soul is revealed again and again in Shakespeare's Caesar.

I have always thought "Candida," Shaw's finest performance, his best play—the perfect flower of his art and being. The kindness in it, the broad humanity are the very perfume of Shaw's spirit.

I have personal reasons to congratulate myself on Shaw's kindness of heart, for when I left France and came to America and told here what Shaw and others have since proved to be the truth about the war and England's responsibility for it, I found that I was being treated in England as a sort of traitor because I preferred to be true to truth rather than to English interests. The baser sort howled at me in every newspaper, and even men like Arnold Bennett, who had followed me with praise for years, were not ashamed now to hint at corruption in order to explain my incomprehensible admiration of certain German virtues. But when I was attacked in some weekly paper, Shaw defended

me in his own way with the old kindliness. He and I have been able to differ about the war without impairing our friendship.

The finest thing about Shaw is that being placed on a pedestal and flattered beyond measure has not increased his arrogance; on the contrary it has rather diminished his self-assertion and increased his kindliness. So long as men denied him the position he was conscious of deserving he demanded it loudly in and out of season; but as soon as they treated him as one of the Immortals and paid him honor, he became more considerate of others and less inclined to stand on the extreme verge of his claim. Like Meredith he can see that too much honor is not good for a man who has to live his life and do his work. Measured by high standards Shaw withstands the tests triumphantly, and what a delight it is to be able in all sincerity to say about a contemporary writer that his character is at least as noble as his best work.

It is the latest thing he has done that sheds most light on Shaw's powers. At sixty odd he has put his critical and incidentally his creative faculty to the severest proof. In his "Preface" to *Androcles and the Lion* he has given us his view of Jesus. When Shaw was defending me in a London journal I replied that I was trying to write about Jesus, had indeed been studying the Master for years with that object.

Shaw at once wrote to me on the matter, and I have pleasure in publishing here that part of his excellent letter:

"It seems to be my destiny to dog your footsteps with apparent plagiarisms. The Shakespeare effort was bad enough, but you now tell me that you are doing the life of Jesus. I am doing exactly the same thing by way of preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, which is a Christian martyr play; so you must hurry up.

"They tell me that what I have gathered from the gospel narratives and the rest of the New Testament, which I have read through attentively for the first time since, as a boy, I read the whole Bible through out of sheer bravado, is much the same as Renan's extract. I do not know whether this is true; for I have never read the *Vie de Jesu*, though I will look it up presently.

"Anyhow, it is rather significant that you and I and George Moore should be on the same tack. The main thing that I have tried to bring out, and indeed the only thing that made the job worth doing for me, is that modern sociology and biology are steadily bearing Jesus out in his peculiar economics and theology."

In reply I wrote that plagiarism or no plagiarism, I should be extremely interested in reading what he had written and would let him

know what I felt about it as soon as I received his book. I was greatly struck with Shaw's essay on Jesus, and here I have set down in haste, I admit, my first thoughts on the work.

Like most of us in this time Shaw has always been obsessed with the idea of reforming the world, remoulding it nearer to the heart's desire and from first to last he has shown a rational consistency of thought.

Wells may be a Socialist to-day and something else to-morrow; but Shaw is no flibbertigibbet or weather-cock. He was a convinced socialist at the beginning of his career when he was young and poor, and now, thirty years later, rich and honored, he is nobly intent on preaching the same doctrine.

That is why this essay of his on Jesus is of supreme importance to any one who wishes to understand and classify him or assimilate his contribution to modern thought.

It is characteristic of Shaw that it is not Jesus as a man that interests him; Christian doctrines would have been preached and practised, he says roundly, "if Jesus had never existed." This is probably true though we know no one in these last nineteen centuries who could have taken the place of Jesus or done his work. Still in time no doubt humanity would have produced another man of similar insight and sweetness. To Shaw "it is the doctrine and not the man that

matters." Here, as always, Shaw is first of all a preacher and not a poet; a dramatist if you like, because he is a born preacher, as Moliere was, and not for love of the drama:

"I am no more a Christian than Pilate was, or you, gentle reader; and yet I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman."

Very notable words, in my opinion, and stamped with a high sincerity. Naturally, Shaw goes on to tell us that he knows "a great deal more about economics and politics than Jesus did," and this superiority of his is based apparently on the fact that he has no sympathy with "vagabonds and talkers" who would subvert the existing social order in the delusion that the end of the world is at hand—a statement which seems reasonable though perhaps superfluous.

Shaw then proceeds to doubt whether Jesus ever existed, and ends up by asserting that it does not matter whether he did or not. Let us look at this assertion in terms of another art. There are half a dozen pictures attributed to X, who has been classed for centuries as probably the greatest of painters. Shaw looks at them, sees they are all by the same hand (Paul even has

nothing to do with them), admits that they have not been equalled in two thousand years,, and yet doubts whether the Master ever existed really, "any more than Hamlet."

One gasps at such a lame and impotent conclusion. Who then painted the pictures? we ask. And Shaw replies, "One symbol is as good as another. . . . Confucius said certain things before Jesus"; yet "for some reason the imagination of white mankind has picked out Jesus as Nazareth as *the* Christ, and attributed all the Christian doctrines to him"—let us leave it at that, he adds implicitly. Fortunately or unfortunately, this seems to me not a theory, but a demonstrable fact. The pictures proclaim the painter, one single creative mind, and Jesus, if we can get to know him, is more important than his teachings or parables, just as Shaw, when we get to know him, is more important than his plays or even his prefaces.

Curiously enough, another dispute Shaw and I had over Shakespeare, crops up again in his criticism of Jesus. He objected strenuously to the gentle, loving, humane, melancholy, philosophising thinker and poet as the man Shakespeare, or rather he accepted all the epithets, while protesting that the "gentle" was overdone. He has exactly the same quarrel with Jesus. He is in the Eracles vein; he cries:

"'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,' is a snivel-

ling modern invention, with no warrant in the gospels."

This assertion made me doubt my eyes. Did not Jesus advise us to turn the other cheek, and to give the cloak to the robber who had taken the coat? Did he not teach that you should do good to your enemies? How does the Sermon on the Mount begin:

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

And to leave you in no doubt Jesus strikes the same note again:

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

This "gentleness," this meekness, this forgiving of injuries, this loving kindness "a snivelling modern invention!"

Shaw, Shaw, why deniest thou me?

It is as certain as anything can be that it was just this gentleness, this meekness, this loving kindness of Jesus that caught the imagination of humanity, and won for him the passionate idolatry of men. Shaw, a combative Anglo-Saxon, may find himself more easily in the Jesus who blasted the barren fig-tree and scourged the money-changers out of the Temple; but that was not the spirit men love in Jesus. Paul could have done all those things or Judas Maccabeus or any of ten thousand brave Jewish rebels who threw their lives to a protest, minted their souls in a curse.

The instinct of humanity that has chosen Jesus—"for some reason," as Shaw remarks—is profoundly right; forgiveness is nobler than punishment and lovingkindness more soul-subduing than any tyranny. It is this gentle, loving Jesus that takes the spirit like the fragrance of a flower or the innocent loveliness of a child.

Jesus was the first to discover the soul, the first to speak to it with certainty, and because of the divination he is throned in the hearts of men forever:

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I attach great importance to the personality of Jesus for many reasons which it would require too much time and space to set forth here; but one reason may be indicated. If one studies the personality of Jesus, one can perceive, I venture to say, a certain growth in his mind, certain moments of development which bring him nearer to us and make him clearer. It was Lecky, I believe, the author of *The History of Rationalism*, who first said that long after Christianity had perished as a creed, Jesus would live as an ideal. If he had said as an influence, I should have agreed with him: the influence and spirit of Jesus are certain to endure for hundreds of centuries to come: But no man can be an "ideal" to us; even Jesus cannot fill the horizon; the time has come to see him as

he was, the wisest and sweetest of the sons of men, whose place in the Pantheon of Humanity is assured forever. His surpassing quality makes it unnecessary to prove his existence by the testimony of Paul, or by the references to his crucifixion in Tacitus and Josephus. It is impossible to study Rembrandt's pictures chronologically without realizing Rembrandt's growth, impossible to read Shakespeare and not see his personality passing from flower to fruit, in the same way we cannot deny Jesus or ignore the Son of Man who became the Son of God.

Three or four of his parables or short stories are the finest ever written; a dozen of his sayings come from a height of thought and feeling hardly reached by any other son of man; he was at once saint and seer and artist of the noblest, and the way he was treated by the world is symbolic of the fate of genius everywhere. His life showed (as he was the first to see), that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country and amid his own kin; his death established the dreadful truth that in measure as one grows better than his fellow men, he incurs their hatred. The highest genius in this world was beaten and scourged and finally crowned in derision with thorns. Crucifixion is the reward given by men to their supreme Guides and Teachers.

Shaw spends a hundred pages or more in a

very fine and fair criticism of the four gospels: he establishes, I am inclined to believe, several truths which more learned commentators have failed to perceive. He says that Luke has added sentiment and romance to the story told by Matthew and Mark, and declares that "it is Luke's Jesus who has won our hearts." He believes on good grounds, I think, that John's gospel was written by the beloved disciple himself, and must be brought within the first century.

The old question as to the credibility of the gospels Shaw declares unimportant: "Belief is merely a matter of taste."

And so he comes back to his beginning: "Jesus remains unshaken as the practical man" and we stand exposed as "the fools, the blunders, the unpractical visionaries." For the root fact remains: our system of distributing wealth "is wildly and monstrously wrong. We have million dollar babies side by side with paupers worn out by a long life of unremitted drudgery. One adult in every five dies in a workhouse, a public hospital or a madhouse. In cities like London the proportion is very nearly one in two. This distribution is effected by violence pure and simple. If you demur you are sold up. If you resist the selling up you are bludgeoned and imprisoned. Iniquity can go no further. . . . Democracy in France and the United States is an imposture and a delusion. It reduces justice

and law to a farce: law becomes merely an instrument for keeping the poor in subjection. Workmen are tried not by a jury of their peers, but by conspiracies of their exploiters. The press is the press of the rich and the curse of the poor. The priest is the complement of the policeman and, worst of all, marriage becomes a class affair."

Never was there such a root and branch condemnation of human society. And the remedy is as sweeping. Shaw states it briefly:

"We must begin by holding the right to an income as sacred and equal just as we now begin by holding the right to life as sacred and equal. The one right is only a restatement of the other. Jesus was a first rate political economist."

Now it would not be difficult to show that this wholesale indictment of the existing social order is as one-sided and extravagant as the eulogies of an individualist of the Manchester school; the bomb is not the best answer to the multi-millionaire, though it is a very natural one. The truth is, both individualism and socialism must find a place in modern life: just as analytic and synthetic chemistry both find their place; but in my opinion Shaw is right in the first article of his creed; the equal right to live presupposes the right to necessities and a fair living wage. As we do not kill the aged and infirm we must provide a living for all; that is the root fact of the new industrial civilization.

And now what is the sum total of the whole story? My readers must see that I regard Shaw the iconoclast, Shaw the railer at British conventions and British hypocrisies, Shaw who has been wise enough or lucky enough to mount himself on a stout bank-balance instead of an aged Rosinante, and from that vantage to attack British conceit and complacent materialism; Shaw the scoffer and sceptic and socialist, as assuredly the most powerful and highest moral influence in the Britain of this time. He has taken the place left vacant by Carlyle and has given proof of as fine a courage and as high a devotion to Truth as the Scot. He has scoffed at the idea of a personal immortality as contemptuously as at the idea of a state where the few suffer from too great wealth almost as much as the many suffer from an unmerited destitution.

Shaw's religion, his view that is of the true meaning of life deserves to be stated:

"This is the true joy in life," he says, "the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap-heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

In the main this is the creed of Carlyle too

and of Goethe though the great German brings joy into it by making the individual himself work consciously for the highest purpose.

Everyone, I think, who treats of this period in history will have to consider Bernard Shaw as far and away the most important figure in Great Britain for nearly a quarter of a century. True, he has no new word in religion for us, no glimpse even of new and vital truth; but he walks honestly by such gleams of light as come to him in the present.

And some of Shaw's plays are at least equal in worth to his critical work and will hold the stage for generations to come. He is among the greatest of English humorists. Everyone can see now that Shakespeare's humor was adventitious and fortunate rather than characteristic. Take Falstaff out of his work and all the other clowns, including even Dogberry, would hardly furnish forth one evening's entertainment. And Falstaff and Dogberry belong to the earliest part of Shakespeare's life; after thirty he became increasingly serious. But Shaw's humor is richer to-day at sixty odd than when he began; the flashes of it illumine every part of his work. The British stage knows no comedies superior to *John Bull's Other Island*, *Candida*, and *Caesar and Cleopatra*."

And this is the Shaw that will hold an unique place in English literature; the humorist, icono-

clast and prophet; the laughing philosopher, whom no one to-day can afford to ignore.

The boy has often been called seriously the father of the man and before I completed this sketch I wanted to get some picture of Shaw as a child which would either change or confirm my estimate of him. After many vain attempts I got a little snapshot of him as a boy from Mrs. Ada Tyrrell, wife of the late Regius Professor of Greek in Trinity College, Dublin. Mrs. Tyrrell is herself a poet of rare talent and has the keen yet generous eyes of a very gifted woman. She writes:

"I can tell you very little more than you know yourself of George's youth after the age of twelve or fourteen, as his family left Ireland to live in London about then. My first memory of George is a little boy in a Holland overall sitting at a table constructing a toy theatre. 'Sonny' the other Shaws called him, then. We lived a few doors from them, and our mothers being both singers, was the bond between us. Even at that early age—George was about ten—he had a superior manner to his sisters and me, a sort of dignity withal, and I remember feeling rather flattered when he condescended to explain anything that I asked him; though we girls were a year or two older.

"I should say, as well as I can judge between the two men, Oscar Wilde and G. B. S., that

George is a good man *all through* and Oscar had only good *impulses*, though with more sentiment than George; more romance in fact, which is always a charm to me. I know George to have been the best of sons and brothers; he is generous, not alone to worthy objects, but to the unworthy as well. I often think that the luxury of having unlimited money is that one can give to both."

This is the highest merit of the man, that while mocking sentimentality he is always true to the best in him as needle to the pole. He has shown us all that a Briton can rise above secular British prejudices and that ingrained English habit of excusing oafish stupidity by the conceit of moral superiority, as if dullness and goodness were Siamese twins.

He has pictured Caesar standing before the Sphinx and admitting that he, too, is "half brute, half woman and half God, and no part of man." The confession though doubtless personal, does not do Shaw justice. I have always thought of him as of Greatheart in Bunyan's allegory, a man so high-minded and courageous he will take the kingdom of heaven by storm and yet so full of the milk of human kindness that he suffers with all the disadvantages of the weak and all the disabilities of the dumb. He is the only man since William Blake who has enlarged our conception of English character; thanks to

the Irish strain in him he encourages us to hope that English genius may yet become as free of insular taint as the vagrant air and as beneficent as sunshine.



Rudyard Kipling

RUDYARD KIPLING



T was, I think, in 1890 or 1891 that I first met Rudyard Kipling in London, shortly after his return from India. I knew of him before I saw him. A couple of years earlier a grey-blue paper book containing some stories of Kipling had fallen into my hands. It bore the imprint of some Indian publisher, and I was enthralled, as every one was enthralled, by the superb narrative power displayed in those "plain tales" of excelling artistry. True, it was rapid impressionist work, slapdash, some called it; but it was supremely effective and original—style, treatment and subject all in perfect harmony. "Soldiers Three" followed, and one began to see that the reign of the English in India had at length produced a singer.

Some of the stories were prefaced by verses, and one heard it said that young Rudyard Kipling was a still greater master of verse than of prose. A little later I got hold of "Departmental Ditties" and simply swallowed them; but Kipling to me was not a poet, his characteristic gift was that of the storyteller; even in verse he was a ballad-writer rather than a master-singer.

I forget whether I wrote asking him to call on me in the office of *The Fortnightly Review*, or whether I asked my assistant, the Rev. John Verschoyle to bring him; but at any rate he came to the office and I took to him at once. He was very young, younger even than I had pictured him: a short, sturdy, bullet-headed man, wearing big glasses which did not altogether hide the keen regard of sharp eyes. The face, like the figure, was strongly cast and well-proportioned. Though he was sincerity itself, without pose or affectation of any kind, ingenuously sincere and open indeed, his personality was not impressive in any way.

That very first afternoon we talked for a couple of hours: I was intensely interested in his stories, eager to tell him how much I liked them, eager to know too whether he preferred to work in verse or prose.

How long had he been in India? How had he come to drift out there? Were the experiences worth the pains of exile?—in short a hundred personal details. I had not written anything of note at the time. I was desperately curious about his past and future work. I wanted to measure him correctly: was he a really great man or not? He told me that his father had lived and done his work in India as a civil engineer, that he himself was born in Bombay in 1865, and that he had helped to edit a paper

there from 1882 to 1889. He had been in China, Japan and the United States as well, yet proposed now to cast anchor if not to strike root in England: "You have no idea how good the English countryside looks to me after India," he exclaimed: "Sussex seems a bit of Paradise."

The office of *The Fortnightly Review* at that time was a sort of debating club from four to seven every afternoon. My assistant and friend, the Rev. John Verschoyle, was an extraordinary man. Of all the men I have met, Swinburne alone had a greater poetic gift: one proof will suffice. He went from Trinity College, Dublin, to Cambridge when he was only seventeen years of age, and while still a Freshmen was asked to write some Greek verses for the cover of the University Calendar: they are there to be read still, though written forty years ago—convincing evidence of an astonishing talent. Verschoyle was a strikingly handsome man, with regular features, fair hair, blue eyes and long Viking-fair moustache. The most noticeable things about him were his high-domed forehead and extraordinary breadth of shoulder: though of barely middle-height, he was exceptionally powerful. Verschoyle was well-read in English literature and had an even greater mastery of English verse than of Greek. His knowledge of English poetry was like Swinburne's, encyclopædic, yet imbrued with passionate prejudices:

he thought Shelley and Wordsworth the greatest English poets after Shakespeare, and as I preferred Blake and Browning and Keats, our arguments were "frequent and free." Of course in knowledge of the technique of verse I was not in the same class with him: he was a master and I was not even a deep student. I have said so much about Verschoyle (the news of whose death has just reached me!) because his discussions with Kipling threw a flood of light on both men.

One afternoon stands out in my memory with astonishing clearness, and it was characteristic of many. Kipling came into the office, and when asked what he had been doing, replied: "Some verses." They were the passionate anti-Irish verses, afterwards published under the heading "Cleared!" I read them with shrinking and dislike. I saw their power, knew too that they would cause a sensation: but I could not and would not publish them. They were certain to increase the already intense English hatred of Ireland, and I would not be a party to feeding that foul flame. At the same time I wanted to keep Kipling as a contributor and did not wish him to feel that I was out of sympathy with his talent. When I had read the screed through, I said:

"*The Times* should publish this. If you're willing, Kipling, I'll read the verses to Walter,

the owner, who's a friend of mine and dines with me this week. I'm sure he'll jump at them, and in *The Times* they will make your name in London."

Kipling thanked me, said there was nothing he'd like better.

"I find myself agreeing with *The Times*," he added, "in almost everything."

I smiled inwardly at the idea of any one being proud of agreeing with *The Times*; but I needed no telling that such a common ground of feeling made it almost certain that Kipling would ultimately reach a world-wide popularity.

There were some careless, slipshod lines in the poem; I, therefore, threw the manuscript across the table to Verschoyle. Though Irish born and bred, Verschoyle was of the English garrison in Ireland and hated Parnell and his Nationalist following as only an Irishman can hate. The sentiment of Kipling's verses appealed to him intensely, but he agreed about the weak lines, and with all courtesy suggested improvements. Kipling lit up immediately, admitted this word, rejected that cadence and argued about another. I sat back and enjoyed the play of wits. Any one who heard the discussion would have had to admit that Verschoyle was a considerably better technician than Kipling, possessing besides a far wider knowledge of English poetry, and the best English usage. Yet I have no wish to disguise

the undoubted fact that Kipling has written better English poetry than Verschoyle ever wrote or could write. I tell the story merely in order to show that Kipling's technical gift as a singer is anything but first rate; his prose, on the other hand, is of high quality.

For a long time I had most pleasant, if never intimate, relations with Kipling. When Buckle, the utterly incompetent Editor of *The Times*, rejected the poem, Kipling sent it to Henley, and it duly appeared in the *Scot's Observer* and created, as I had expected, an extraordinary sensation. One peculiar point about the matter is, that the verses as printed in the *Observer* were afterwards reprinted in *The Times*.

As a man of the world Kipling understood that *The Fortnightly Review* had certain Radical traditions and leanings, which made it difficult for me to publish an anti-nationalist poem. He let my refusal make no change in the cordiality of our intercourse. But the whole discussion showed me the very texture, so to speak, of Kipling's mind. He was intensely eager to get the most forcible, or most picturesque, or most musical expression for his passionate prejudices; he was fair-minded too in accepting any and every good suggestion or emendation; but he was not willing even to consider the opposite side of the question. His mind seemed closed to any argument. He appeared to have

no understanding of the fact that in any great dispute the partisan is almost certainly at fault, the only way of growth being to extract the opposing truths and unite them in a higher synthesis which should include both. Rudyard Kipling was proud of being a partisan, proud of holding and asserting the English view of every question. Nine times out of ten he even preferred the Tory English view to the Liberal.

One day I spoke bitterly of the exploitation of the poor by the powerful in Great Britain. It did not seem to interest him.

On another occasion I exposed the partiality of some English judge, who was evidently defending the oligarchy against the people's interests. Kipling assured me that English judges were notoriously the fairest in the world: "were they not the best paid?" He had the prejudices and opinions of a fourth-form English school-boy on almost every subject coupled with an extraordinary verbal talent: the mind of a boy of sixteen with a genius for expression.

I came to this conclusion through dozens of conversations: several times we stayed arguing in the office till it was time to close, and then I went with him to his rooms or he came with me.

Alike with word of mouth as with pen, Kipling was a most admirable story-teller. I remember one evening going to his room somewhere off the Strand, and while I filled the soli-

tary armchair he sat on the bed smoking a pipe and told me how he had once witnessed a succession of wild-beast fights staged by some Indian prince. He pictured the fight between a tiger and a buffalo with photographic vision. You saw the great cat flattened out on the arena while the buffalo with lowered head and side-long eyes moved nearer and nearer. Suddenly the flaming beast shot through the air, but was met fairly by the buffalo's iron front and horns and flung bodily yards away to the side and rear; like a flash it sprang again and again was met and thrown. At once it fled to the wooden wall and began licking its wounds. In spite of long red gashes on his head and neck the buffalo was always the aggressor; nearer and nearer he went, while the tiger drew itself together, every hair on end, and struck fiercely at his head, with one paw laying the bone bare in long parallel slashes and ripping off part of the nose; the next moment the buffalo had nailed the tiger to the barrier with one horn and kept on butting and kneading the writhing beast against the wood till one heard the hooped ribs crack while the whole structure shook. The tiger bit and clawed as long as life lasted, and when finally the buffalo, bellowing with rage, drew off from the dead mat, his head was one dripping scarlet wound; he had to be shot.

The gift of swift narration and painting word

was Kipling's as it was O. Henry's; but he hadn't even O. Henry's power of self-criticism. In an admirably vigorous and interesting story: "The Drums of the Fore and Aft," he tells how a British force, having hemmed in a band of Afghans, drove them hither and thither, attacking first from this side, then from that. The Afghan force, he said, appeared to be slowly melting away, chased, now here, now there, as a "hand chases a sponge in a bath." A moment's thought would have told him that the phrase should be as a "hand chases soap in a bath"; but he did not correct his prose very carefully.

Our disagreement went far deeper than words, though our companionship for some time was very pleasant at least to me. Bit by bit I came to see that he had told me all about India he had to tell: he began to repeat himself, and even report cantonment and clubhouse stories, giving me the rinsings of his Indian experiences. He always assumed that the English rule was the best thing that had happened to India: the *Pax Britannica* held to peace a score of warring races and conflicting religions. To ask him whether it had not resulted in the enslavement and impoverishment of millions of the poorest was to excite surprise. He had never considered that side of the matter: The English had given railways to India: was the sufficient answer.

I wanted to know how far Indian thought had

pierced, whether any Buddhist had gone beyond Gautama, whether any new and fruitful generalization had come from Hindu thinkers, whether any Yogi or holy man had ever planted his lantern out into the uncharted darkness? Nothing of any moment could I get from Kipling, no illuminating word. I came to the conclusion that he took but little interest in new ideas.

One evening in the office he told us an excellent story: it was published later and my readers may recognize it. He started by picturing a man and a woman riding up a mountain road under the deodars near Simla. The man was trying to persuade the woman to leave her husband and run away with him. He proved to his own satisfaction that the woman's husband did not love her, and declared that his love for her was infinite and eternal. The woman replied that a man's love usually died with possession and that it was hardly worth while to throw over convention and outrage public opinion when one had no certainty of lasting affection, and so forth and so on. The story was made lifelike and entrancing by the art of the narrator, for there was no new argument used, no deep realization of character—superficial snapshots merely, cleverly brought out. In the middle of the discussion, an Indian with a bullock-team and huge balk of timber, came into sight round a bend of the road. The man's pony shied at the

apparition and slid a hind leg over the edge of the precipice: the woman, seeing the danger, snatched at the man's rein and hit his pony on the nose. At once pony and wooer disappeared into the abyss. And there the story ended.

This conclusion seemed to me silly—indefensible, a sin against all the canons. To end a psychological discussion by a brutal accident was an insult to the intelligence.

"Why?" countered Kipling, "accidents do happen in life."

"True," I replied, "but they are rare. If you were writing a whole life you might want an accident in it to fulfil the laws of probability—but an accident, and a fatal accident at that, is not likely to take place in a wooing of ten minutes. It is too improbable, and in art the improbable is worse than the impossible. It shocks me."

"I see the Indian," he replied, a remark which closed the discussion.

The more I thought over the argument, the more indifferent to him I became. I saw that the man was all of one piece, that beyond his talent of expression he had nothing to give; my interest in him withered away at the root.

But, after all, why should I quarrel with Kipling or scorn him for what he is not, instead of pointing out what he is and what he has given to deserve our gratitude. Walter Scott's stories

are not from the depths of thought nor do his songs bring men to "sympathy with hopes and fears they heeded not." And yet his books have proved the joy of many a young life, and not one reader in ten thousand has even heard of the shameful book in which, out of mistaken patriotism, he traduced and caricatured the great Napoleon. Thank God! it is not the evil but the good men do, that lives after them, and it becomes one better therefore to praise than to blame. At the same time it is well to remember that it is just the want of thought in Scott, the want of self-criticism, what Rossetti used to call "the fundamental brain stuff," that prevents him from ranking with the greatest, with Cervantes and Balzac and Shakespeare. And it is the same defect that forbids us to put Kipling among the choice and master spirits of this age. I have read everything he has written since, and have found no reason to modify my judgment. "Kim" and "The Jungle Book" are better than any of his earlier stories, save only "The Man Who Would Be King." The jungle books in especial seems to me the best thing Kipling has ever done or is ever likely to do: but I get more of the soul of India from the native writers.

His poetry is even easier to judge. "On the Road to Mandalay" and a chance verse from time to time remain in the mind and enrich the memory; but Kipling's poetic gift is neither high

nor rare, save in the intensity of patriotic appeal.
Such verses as:

“I am the land of their fathers,
In me the virtue stays;
I will bring back my children
After certain days.

“Till I make plain the meaning
Of all my thousand years—
Till I fill their hearts with knowledge,
While I fill their eyes with tears.”

and especially this:

“Take of English earth as much
As either hand may rightly clutch
In the taking of it breathe
Prayer for all who lie beneath—
Lay that earth upon your heart
And your sickness shall depart!”

can hardly be read by any one of English birth, without profound emotion: it thrills all those who use our English speech: yet patriotism as a creed no longer holds the place it once held, and as a sentiment even, its dangers are becoming more and more obvious.

It seems to me that the world-war is a fearsome object lesson in the evils of undue love of country: a dozen nations fighting savagely—what

for? Because every man overrates national interests, regarding them as uniquely important. National self-centeredness, national pride—the cause of this insane butchery! Long ago in the best minds and hearts, love of country has been pushed into a secondary place by the love of humanity. Now the masses have been taught the same lesson by awful bloodshed and loss.

But the question now before us is: how far Kipling's patriotism is laudable and how it has affected his work? I believe that again and again it has injured it and must finally impair his influence.

Kipling's parochialism and its distorting effect can best be realized by us in the picture he drew of America. Not Dickens, not even Antony Trollope at his worst reached such perversity of judgment, such immoral obliquity of vision. He lands in San Francisco and with incredible cocksureness uses at once his Cockney yardstick as a measure.

"San Francisco is a mad city—inhabited for the most part by insane people whose women are of a remarkable beauty."

And his notion of sanity and insanity may be gauged by the talk on the Queen's birthday which he quotes with approval. He makes an American say that England "is beginning to rot now," because it is "putting power into the hands of the untrained people." The government of

the English obligarchy seems to Kipling perfect, but any attempts at democracy, such as County Councils even, are a symptom of decadence and dry rot. Here is another judgment:

"The American has no language. He has dialect, slang, provincialism, accent, and so forth. Now that I have heard their voices all the beauty of Bret Harte is being ruined for me."

And he does not object merely to our voices but to our clothes, and of course "the habit of spitting" which he finds on all sides.

Moreover, men carry revolvers in the West and sometimes use them. He concludes therefore: "there is neither chivalry nor romance in the weapon for all that American authors have seen fit to write. I would I could make you understand the full measure of contempt with which certain aspects of Western life have inspired me."

And, finally, we praise ourselves in public speeches and he can't imagine how a self-respecting man, "a sahib of our blood can stand up and plaster praise on his own country."

Yet Kipling tells us in "Stalky & Co." that "India's full of Stalkies—Cheltenham and Marlborough chaps—that we don't know anything about, *and the surprises will begin when there is a really big row on.*"

Well, there was soon a big row on and the surprises were there all right. We were surprised

when a couple of thousand (or was it a couple of hundred) British marines were landed to hold Antwerp against two hundred thousand Germans; we were surprised at Gallipoli, and again at Salonica and at Cambray. All such fantastic misjudgings—blame and praise alike—might be forgiven to Kipling's youth; were it not that his myopia increases with age.

A great part of Kipling's popularity and consequent quick rise to wealth and influence are due directly to his passionate, blind herd-feeling. No high thought would have helped him as much as the general prejudice. It was probably the popular applause which confirmed him in his error. He is serious when he writes of "The White Man's Burden," though he knows as well as any one that the white man makes himself a burden to his black brother out of the lowest motives. Again and again, too, he has written of Russia as the enemy of England and he did not hesitate in the story entitled "The Man Who Was" to try to stir up ill-feeling between Englishmen and Russians without any excuse. In this same tale, some British officers at mess on the Northwest frontier of India drink the usual toast, "The Queen," and Kipling pictures them as weeping with emotion. At its best, patriotism is a pride founded on the great deeds of a nation, and at its most idiotic, it sheds tears for symbols questionable if not unworthy.

In the present world-war Kipling has won an evil pre-eminence by vilifying Germany in every way. He was not ashamed to write of Germans as a disease-germ, which if "suffered to multiply means death or loss to mankind. . . . The German is typhoid or plague—Pestis Teutonicus: . . . at the end of the war," he declared, "there must be no more Germans."

The mind balks at such extravagance of hatred: one cries for that quiet shore—

Where the Rudyards cease from Kipling
And the Haggards Ride no more.

Let us go to the true master spirits and see what they think of patriotism.

In his essay on "Honour and Reputation," Bacon gives us his view of the hierarchy of human achievement. The greatest men, he tells us, are the founders of States; then come the saviours of States, then the enlargers of States; then lawgivers, statesmen and so forth. Bacon, with his Latin scholarship, regarded patriotism as the supreme virtue.

Shakespeare, I believe, was the very first man to outgrow patriotism and realize its insufficiency; his Alcibiades tells us:

'Tis honor with most lands to be at odds.

Shakespeare was naturally the first writer to speak of "humanity." He was not thinking of

the Roman Antony but of himself when he wrote:

“ . . . A rarer spirit never
Did steer humanity; . . . ”

And this mere statement has flagged the coming of a new ideal into life or rather in some degree created the new ideal. For we all see now that humanity is the ideal, that patriotism as a virtue has been to some extent superseded; “Where it’s well with me—there’s my fatherland,” says the Latin proverb. An undue love or preference of one nation or race is as absurd in thought as it is dangerous in fact.

Goethe took this view very emphatically. His words to-day are worth recalling: “I am blamed,” he said, “because I do not dislike the French and take sides against them; but how can I dislike the French when I owe them a great part of my intellectual being?”

In this modern dispute, Kipling is plainly on the wrong side: even England will yet have to learn that Shaw is a nobler figure and a better patriot besides. What does Walter Scott’s hatred of Napoleon count for to-day? It merely excites a shrug of contemptuous pity.

Kipling’s dislike of the United States and Russia and now of Germany is even less excusable; it is indeed nothing but English “strachery”—the sour reaction of inferior vitality or virtue masquerading as moral condemnation.

Only the other day Kipling lamented his ignorance of French; but it is his ignorance of Russian and especially of German that I deplore. If he knew Goethe and Heine, Lessing and Schopenhauer, he could never have soiled his pages with such abominable nonsense about the great German people as I have quoted. It is his ignorance, his want of education that dwarfs him and maims his gift to humanity.

It is impossible for me to part from Kipling on this note; he has interested us so often, given us so much pleasure; dazzled us with such brilliant pictures that we are all perforce his debtors and grateful. When his name comes up it is not his English provincialism we recall, but the pulsing life on the great Indian highroad in "Kim," or the magic verses:—

"Ship me somewhere East of Suez,
Where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no ten commandments
And a man may raise a thirst.

"Ah, it's there that I would be
By the old Moulmein pagoda
Looking lazy at the sea."

ERNEST DOWSON: THE SWAN-SONG OF YOUTH.

"Mother of God; O Misericord, look down in pity on us.
The weak and the blind who stand in our light and wreak our-
selves such ill."



WHATEVER we want in life, whatever we desire intensely and with persistence, we are sure to obtain.

"All our youthful prayers are granted," says Goethe: "brimming measure in maturity." That is the chief lesson of life: You can mold it to what form you will, get from it what you wish: *Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Ask and ye shall have.* You can make it hymn or epic, as you please, get joy from it, or sorrow or love, or fame—greatness of soul or fatness of purse—whatever you will; if you only *will* it with all your might to the end.

That's almost the same as saying that life gives herself to the strong only: for they alone can will steadfastly; but what of the weak? What of those who dream rather than desire and whose dreams are fitful and faint? Sometimes life grants even to these the triumph of a moment, the ecstasy of achievement, when they have dreamed beautiful things and loved them with intense passion.

I can't remember who introduced me to Ernest



Ernest Dowson

Dowson or where we first met; but I knew him from about 1890 up to the end of his brief life.

Dowson was born, I think, in 1867 and died about 1900. He was physically weak and slight though of good height; he had not stuff enough in him, I thought at first, to be great; yet in various ways he interested me intensely. He was very like Keats without Keats's strength or joy in life; a fragile, scholarly Keats. On first acquaintance shy; yet impulsive and frank with a singular charm of manner; he appealed to the heart as some girls do with a child's confidence and a child's hesitancy and a sort of awkward unexpected grace, quite indescribable. He was gentle too and gay with quaint quirks of verse, unprintable often, amusing always—a delightful companion, quick-changing as an April day.

His portrait by Rothenstein is an extraordinarily perfect likeness; for once the artist has been able to reproduce the features and convey too the elusive charm and sad, sincere appeal of an ingenuous, delightful spirit.

When I first knew Dowson he made the impression of peculiar refinement; he was sensitive to all courtesies, vibrant with enthusiasms, yet instinctively considerate. I was always glad to meet him, though I held his talent lightly; his early verses being for the most part echoes of Verlaine and Swinburne, and nothing so re-

pels me as the "sedulous ape" faculty, imitation—the hallmark of mediocrity.

I went with him one evening into a little bar off Leicester Square and he recited I remember, a translation of a verse of Verlaine.

I had to tell him that while the ineffable sadness of the verse was characteristic of Verlaine, the translation was rather poor.

"So was the price paid for it," he laughed, "a measly ten shillings. What can you expect for that?" He spoke disdainfully, yet not from greed. He thought his work good enough to deserve high pay. He was not needy, he always seemed to be able to live decently without work; he had good connections, properties even, was never really in want, but he struck me as careless of money and improvident to an extraordinary degree.

I was away from London for a year or two and Dowson was much in France and when we next met, he had changed. There was a spring of life in him, of hope and purpose I had not seen before. He confessed to me that he was in love with a French girl whose mother kept a small restaurant in Soho; he took me round to see her. I could find little attraction in her except the beauty of youth and the fact that she evidently didn't care much for Dowson—a girlish, matter-of-fact, pleasant creature. I could not believe that the fever would be lasting or profound. I was mistaken,

One day he drifted into lunch and revealed himself more boldly. We talked of literature and he seemed to like everything second rate in it, I thought: he loved Horace and any curious, arresting epithet pleased him beyond measure. I said something about "eventful originality" and he jumped up and clapped his hands and crowed with delight, repeating again and again "eventful eventful originality," We went out for a stroll into Hyde Park, and as we walked he compared himself with Poe: "a master of both prose and verse his prose better than his verse, as mine is—" I laughed: I thought (God forgive me!) he was overrating himself, measuring stature with Poe. I quoted a verse of *Annabel Lee* to recall him to himself. He praised it laughing joyously in his odd boyish way and then said half shyly: "I've written some verses I like rather."

"Let me hear them," I cried, and he stopped and began as if to encourage himself, "I call it: 'Sapientia Lunæ,'" and he translated: "The Wisdom of the Moon." A pause: he twisted his thin hands together and began:

"The wisdom of the world said unto me:

'Go forth and run, the race is to the brave;
Perchance some honor tarrieth for thee!'

'As tarrieth,' I said, 'for sure, the grave.'
For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
Which to her votaries the moon discloses."

I can still see the slight, stooping figure and the liquid, appealing eyes—framed, so to speak, by a bed of crimson flowers:

“Perchance some honor tarrieth for thee!”

The lure of all poets, of all nympholepts of the ideal. . . . Again the pleasing pathetic tenor voice:

“Then said my voice: “Wherefore strive or run
On dusty highways ever, a vain race?
The long night cometh, starless, void of sun,
What light shall serve thee like her golden face?
For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
And knew some secrets which the moon discloses.”

I can't give reasons but the poem struck me—“her golden face”; Dowson's manner; the singing verses, above all the pathos, the passion of his love, trembling, yet controlled in the slow music, deepened the appeal, lifted the poem to greatness.

“Why, Dowson,” I exclaimed, “love has made a poet of you! That's first rate—a new note.”

He half smiled and then walked on flushed—pensive:—“Love—love makes poets of us all,” he said as if to himself. We spent the afternoon and evening together, dining at the Cafe Royal. I was astonished by his range of reading and his intimacy with the Latins, especially Propertius; he was saturated too in French and Italian poetry and had modern English verse at his tongue's tip. About ten o'clock he

grew silent; he wished to go round to his French restaurant, he said, and I let him go, for I was a little tired of hearing him praise Mallarme and Verlaine, extravagantly, as I thought.

A little later we met again and spent a sunny morning together, lunched and talked the sun down the sky: poetry of course and metaphysics. He would not have my American optimism, shrugged his shoulders at my idea of the Kingdom of Man upon earth and a new Jerusalem to be builded on Seine or Thames or Hudson-side:—

Our world is young,
Young, and of measure passing bound,
Infinite are the heights to climb
The depths to sound.

"I am for the old faith," he broke in; "I've become a Catholic as every artist must. Have you heard this?—

" 'Upon the eyes, the lips, the feet,
On all the passages of sense,
The atoning oil is spread with sweet
Renewal of lost innocence.' "

With a gasp of surprise I recognized that he had become a master of his instrument; the mounting music of the last couplet is super-excellent.

I didn't see him again for a couple of years and then he was with Smithers, I think, when we met. Dowson had changed greatly: youth

and youth's enthusiasms, the lively quick changes of mood had died out of him; he was serious, disdainful; his clothes seemed threadbare and unbrushed; he met me with petulant indifference; a touch of resentment, I thought. Had I omitted some courtesy? or was I one of the many heedless and profane who should have known and helped him and did not? I wondered regretfully.

The second or third time I saw him he was drunk, helplessly, hopelessly drunk—and wore—"I don't care"—as a mask. And soon, it seems to me in retrospect, the drinking Dowson obscured for me much of the charm of the younger Dowson. Often he was delightful at first when we met; yet always eager to drink and to get drunk, eager to throw away his hold on life and sanity,—to drown the bitter stings of remembrance. I soon found out that his love had jilted him: "chucked him for a waiter," said Smithers grinning. Though not so deep as a drawwell, nor broad as a church door, as Mercutio said, the wound served, and Dowson died of it. After a couple of years' courtship,—talks at lunch, games of cards after dinner, a kiss or two, friendly on one side and passionate on the other, the illusion of love returned,—she married a waiter, and Dowson could never recover his fragile hold on life and hope. Dowson's only epigram tells the whole story:

Because I am idolatrous and have besought,
With grievous supplication and consuming prayer,
The admirable image that my dreams have wrought
Out of her swan's neck and her dark abundant hair:
The jealous gods, who brook no worship save their own,
Turned my live idol and her heart to stone.

I did not realize the tragedy on first hearing. But a little while afterwards, we floated together again one afternoon in Coventry Street and Dowson asked me to accompany him to a dock he owned in the East End. He seemed pathetically weak and dependent on casual companionship, lonely and unhappy.

The East of London was always calling me at that time as the East Side of New York calls me now and I went with him. We dined in a frowsy room behind a bar on a bare table without a napkin: the food almost uneatable, the drink poisonous, and afterwards Dowson took me round to places of amusement! The memory of it all,—a nightmare; I can still hear a girl droning out an interminable song meant to be lively and gay; still see a woman clog-dancing just to show glimpses of old, thin legs, smiling grotesquely the while with toothless mouth; still remember Dowson hopelessly drunk at the end screaming with rage and vomiting insults—a wretched experience.

A week later he wanted me to go East again; but I had had enough. What the French call *la nostalgie de la boue* (the homesickness for

squalor and mud-honey) was upon him and he abandoned himself to it.

Once I remonstrated with him; took him into the Cafe Royal one morning, cheered him with excellent coffee, begged him, for his talent's sake, to pull himself together; everything was still possible to him: he shrugged his shoulders.

I probed him to know if money would help him: he laughed, "Hope would help me and nothing less." Eager to rouse him, I spoke of him as a dreamer, a failure. He reddened and said: "I've written things you'd like, oh, yes! Things you'd like very much."

"Let me hear them," I cried, "and I'll believe," and he recited some verses of the poem *Impenitentia Ultima*:

"Before my light goes out for ever if God should give me
a choice of graces,
I would not reck of length of days, nor crave for things
to be;
But cry: 'One day of the great lost days, one face of all
the faces,
Grant me to see and touch once more and nothing more
to see.

• • • • •
" 'But once before the sand is run and the silver thread is
broken

Give me a grace and cast aside the veil of dolorous years,
Grant me one hour of all mine hours, and let me see for a
token

Her pure and pitiful eyes shine out, and bathe her feet
with tears.

"'Before the ruining waters fall and my life be carried under,
And Thine anger cleave me through as a child cuts down a flower,
I will praise Thee, Lord, in Hell, while my limbs are racked asunder,
For the last sad sight of her face and the little grace of an hour.'"

The verses sang the desire of his heart, with consuming passion, and taught me all his love-madness and despair: but I was determined—hoping it might spur him to better things—not again to lose my critical attitude. I nodded my head and said:

"First rate; the hands are the hands of Dowson but the voice is the voice of Swinburne."

"Oh, that be damned," he cried, "the voice is mine; 'my cup may be small.' " he quoted, "but it's mine." Here's something to a madman in Bedlam," and he began reciting again. The last couplet caught me, rapt me out of time:

". . . . ;better than love or sleep,
The star-crowned solitude of thine oblivious hours!"

It was splendid; it sang itself and satisfied the critical faculty in me; yet there was better to come, I divined. Dowson nodded too with a challenge as of one sure of himself:

"Here is my best," he said, and began with a voice that trembled in spite of himself:

"Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.
"I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

I could not help myself: I was enthralled.
He paused.

"Go on," I begged, and he went on:
"I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

"The greatest poem of this time," I exclaimed;
"sure to live; why should one be afraid to say it:
sure to live forever." And I looked at him with
a sort of wonder; for this frail creature had done
it before any of us, had scaled Heaven and stood
there throned among the Immortals.

Tears had been in his voice almost from the
beginning. When I burst out in praise of him,
tears were pouring down his face and after the
last verse as I praised him enthusiastically, he
leant his head on his hands and gave the tears

way. When the fit had passed and he had wiped his eyes I said, cursing myself for my previous harshness:

"No wonder, you are impenitent, you are quite right. Whatever brought you to that height is good: whatever way you trod, blessed. What do the thorns matter? or the bowl; whether of hyssop or hemlock, who cares? Your name is enskied and sacred, shrined in the hearts of men forever and I called you a weak dreamer and a failure. Well, your answer is:

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

And then I made up my mind to try to cure him; admiration had moved him; would commonsense help or ridicule; humor or sympathy? I'd try every motive.

"Fancy," I began, "that little French girl calling forth such a passion in you! It astounds me that you can't see her as she was and is with nothing to her but the beauty of youth. She had nothing in her, Dowson, or she'd never have preferred a waiter to you."

Dowson looked at me: "What did Keats see in Fanny Brawne?"

"But don't you know," I cried, "that you'd only have to take hold of yourself for a month and go out among the better class girls in London to find someone infinitely superior to her in body and mind and soul; someone worthy of you

and your genius. For God's sake, man, give life a chance to show you what jewels it holds!"

"I've lost the one pearl," he said, and added dreamily: "What's life good for but to be lived to the full; the whole meaning of it is in the moment when you reach the ultimate of feeling and can throw life away as holding nothing higher. To me passion is the way to Nirvana, love the supreme sacrament, the perfect chrysolite—"

"You can find a dozen finer gems," I cried, "incomparably more lustrous, more—"

He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "More to your taste, I dare say—not to mine. Can't you see," he burst out with sudden violence, "that I loved her just because you and the others could find nothing in her; no beauty in her curving white neck and the way the dark tendrils curled on it; no sweetness in the pure eyes and mocking gay laughter; nothing. But I saw, and knew she was mine, made for me and me alone to love and possess. Can't you see that the less she was yours, man, the more she was mine; all mine—mine alone; no one else could know her and her shy, elusive grace. Ah, God—how did I lose her? Why?"

And the face froze into despair, wild-eyed with agonizing remorse. His couplet came into my head:

You would have understood me, had you waited;
I could have loved you, dear, as well as he:

Suddenly I realized that there was nothing to be done. A desperate gamester, Dowson had risked all on one throw and lost—and yet how easy it had been to have won; how easy; (that was the sting)—and how impossible for him!

Always I know, how little severs me
From mine heart's country, that is yet so far;
And must I lean and long across a bar,
That half a word would shatter utterly?

That half-word was never uttered!

Whenever we love passionately we cannot angle for love; we can only pray for it—not call it into being by cunning or feigned indifference; we can only give royally and wait in vain—the tears of youth, the bitterest tears of this unintelligible world.

Let be at last: colder she grows and colder;
Sleep and the night were best;
Lying at last where we cannot behold her,
We may rest.

The pathos of it all and the music!

In other years Dowson wrote another book of verse—"Decorations"—mere echoes; books of prose too—some novels done in collaboration and a slight volume of short stories—"Dilemmas"—which deserve mention perhaps for a certain subdued sadness and careful delicate workmanship—dead rose leaves still exhaling a faint sweet perfume.

The last days of his short life were spent mainly abroad; in Paris and Brittany, Dieppe and Normandy. In especial he loved Paris as many Englishmen love it with a peculiar and passionate emotion as a city where art is cherished as an ideal higher even than life, and it was from Paris that he wrote the letter, the postscript of which I reproduce in facsimile

It gives a curious snapshot of life in Paris, about 1899, a lightning gleam illuminating not only Sherard and Rowland Strong, but also Oscar Wilde, in a characteristic attitude.

Dowson's handwriting shows, something of the lucidity, the delicacy, the love of beauty which were his enduring characteristics.

I met severally & separately yesterday afternoon Oscar, Strong & Sherard - all inveighing bitterly against one another & two of them discussing divers fashions of self-destruction. Oscar was particularly grieved because of a Swedish baron (whom he had met at Marlott) & of whom he hoped much) who had borrowed 5 francs from him on the Boulevard.

*For me
S. West Dowson*

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was particularly grieved because of a Swedish baron (whom he had met at Marlotte & of whom he hoped much) who had borrowed 5 francs from him on the Boulevard.

Yours ever,

Ernest Dowson.

Usually when abroad Dowson sought the slums: "The common people," he used to say, "everywhere smack of race; gentle-folk have no nationality," and he loved the French, indeed every Latin people. There was in him an uncomplaining almost stoical independence curiously akin to hopelessness: for months at a time he was half-starved; yet he would not appeal to his relations who could and would have helped him, still less to his friends whose aid would only have been limited by their means; for Dowson had the gift of making himself loved by every one save that once when love meant everything to him.

In the last year of his life he returned to London: "Poverty can hide in London better than anywhere else," he often said. A friend, Robert Sherard, found him one day—destitute, shabby, hungry and ill—coughing ominously: he took him with him to a bricklayer's cottage in which he himself was living on the outskirts of Catford and there tended him in all love and pity.

In spite of the consumption from which he

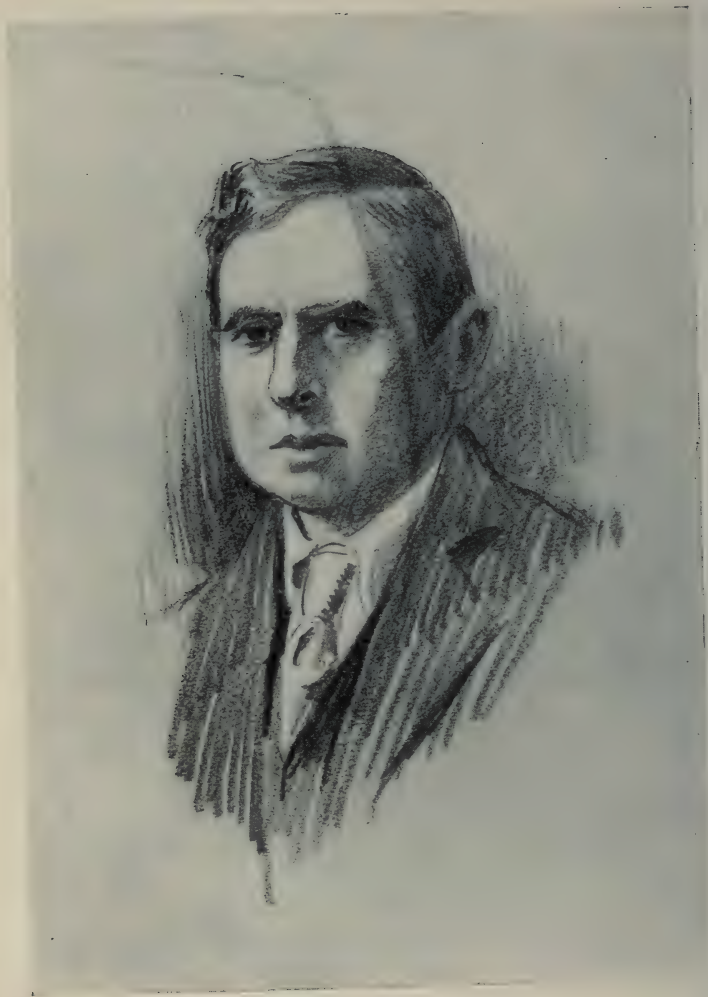
was suffering I can imagine Dowson quite happy in this little haven of rest. Under his shyness he was intensely affectionate; when moved, he liked to touch and caress one as a woman does and loving kindness and mental companionship were what he most desired on earth and most prized.

Like consumptives in general, Dowson had no notion that his end was near; he was often full of hope and always full of literary projects: £600 was to come to him from the sale of some property, then he would make "a fresh start"! Talking thus one day, he leant forward to cough with more ease and drooped back fainting: he had made his fresh start.

Dowson's life was very brief and many would call it miserable, but he gave himself to love with single-hearted devotion, and his passion brought him what he most desired—a place among the English poets forever, immortality as we mortals measure it!

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

There are few greater lyrics in all English verse: none more poignant-sad.



Theodore Dreiser

THEODORE DREISER



CAME across "Sister Carrie" when it was first published in England ten or twelve years ago and it made a deep and enduring impression on me. I sent copies of it broadcast to all my friends and those whom I knew to be interested in literature. The story of the gradual decay and ruin of Hurstwood seemed to me a masterly piece of work and I considered the book one of the modern novels most likely to live.

I was naturally curious, therefore, to meet the author, and almost as soon as I came to stay in New York I looked him up.

Dreiser's appearance surprised me; he seemed clumsy: a big burly man—he must be five feet ten or eleven in height and weigh some 190 pounds; a large head with German features. I mean by German, irregular, large, and fleshy, as if moulded in putty; the mouth sensuous with thick lips; the eyes (the feature of the face) thoughtful gray eyes with a sort of glance to the side in one of them that gives you the impression of a cast and conveys the idea of quick alertness—very distinctive in a man whose manner is rather heavy and whose speech is inclined to be slow and impressive.

Naturally I talked with him both about his books and about his life, particularly about the early formative years and the moulding influ-

ences. In brief outlines this is what he told me:

He was brought up in the small country town of Evansville, Ind., as a strict Catholic; his father was a Catholic bigot; "I never knew," he says, "a narrower, more hide-bound religionist nor one more tender and loving in his narrow way. He was a crank, a tenth-rate Saint Simon (*sic!*) or Francis of Assissi." His mother, on the other hand, was a "happy, hopeful animal; an open, uneducated, wondering, dreamy mind; a pagan mother taken over into the Catholic Church at marriage; a great poet-mother because she loved fables and fairies and half believed in them; a great-hearted mother—loving, tender, charitable. I always say I know how great some souls can be because I know how splendid that of my mother was."

The first books that made any impression on Dreiser were Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" and the "Vicar of Wakefield." They seemed to him like real life. When he was almost thirteen, he had a woman teacher at the public school who was "astonishingly sympathetic." He writes to her still. She suggested his reading Hawthorne, Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper, and then Thackeray, Dryden and Pope. A little later Carlyle's "French Revolution" was a sort of revelation to him while Shakespeare opened a new world full of color and light.

When he was about fourteen or so he fell in

love with a girl of his own age, Dora Yaisley, but was too shy to approach her; remembers being chased and kissed by another playmate, Augusta Neuweiler, "plump and pretty, with a cap of short dark ringlets swirling about her eyes and ears and a red and brown complexion and an open, pretty mouth."

At sixteen he went to Chicago and worked for a hardware company at \$5 a week. He soon realized with a horrible depression that he could never be a successful salesman, which was at the moment the object of his ambition; he would never get money enough to marry and be happy.

"Had you flirted before this time?"

"No," he replied. "I was more frightened of girls than of lightning and felt the same horrible depression about them and my chance of success with them as I felt in regard to business. At the same time many of them seemed beautiful to me and I longed to have them like me; they formed most of the brightness of life. I remember when I was about sixteen, two girls came past one day and saw me swinging; they began to talk and evidently wanted to make friends. I swung them, too, but I could not even respond to their advances.

"Another girl, I remember, put her arms round me one evening and held my hands. I could not speak; my heart was in my mouth; I was nearer choking than kissing; I could not

believe that she liked me, much less admired me. I lived in this horrible depression till I was nearly twenty.

"While working in the hardware store I met one acquaintance who exercised a great influence over me. He was a Dane—a drunkard and a lecher—excessively vicious, but with marvellous brains, I thought, marvellous ability. He taught me a lot about politics and statecraft and really made me believe in the relative crudeness of life in Western America as compared with Europe—a thing wholly incredible to me at first. He laughed Christianity off the boards for me. Up to that time I had been a believer, but he introduced me to Spencer and Lecky and altogether widened my horizon in the most amazing way. He would borrow money from me and tell me afterwards he would not pay me back, which I thought extraordinary, but I forgave him because he was so valuable to me.

"A little later I met another woman teacher who helped me on my upward way with real intelligence. She was a Miss Fielding. She proposed that I should go to college. I told her I hadn't the money; she said she would help me and she did help me. At her instigation I wrote to David Starr Jordan, at that time President at Bloomington, and he was good enough to relax scholastic requirements in my favor, for he agreed with Miss Fielding that I would get

the intellectual atmosphere at college and such an experience must do me good.

"I attended college for something over a year, from eighteen to nineteen. I learned little in the way of positive knowledge, but I got a vision of the intellectual fields and began to realize the significance of languages and scientific studies. But the economic pressure was too heavy on me and at nineteen I returned to Chicago and became a clerk in a real estate office—a rent chaser at \$8 a week. This work gave me some time to myself; after I had collected my rents I could spend the afternoon and evening reading; but the company failed and I became a collector for a furniture house at \$12 a week; a little later I got \$14 a week. I found it possible here by working earnestly to get time to myself, and I read Green's "History of England," Guizot's "France" and Macaulay. But my daily work seemed trivial to me and I felt I was no good at it."

I have dwelt at length on this early failure of Dreiser as a business man, because I believe it explains his wonderful painting of Hurstwood's failure and fall to ruin in "Sister Carrie." Dreiser soon found the upward path. Again I let him tell his story:

"At this time Eugene Field was writing for the Chicago *Daily News* little pictures of Chicago life. After reading two or three of them

I thought I ought to be able to do work like that myself. I sat down and wrote a lot of similar sketches and sent them to him, but he never answered me. This was the nadir of my depression. Life was most beautiful to me—thrilling as a poem. When I thought of the girls I passed in the street I could have sung or wept, they were so attractive to me, but my own relation to life was all wrong and I did not know how to set it right; it was Field who started me thinking about becoming a reporter and writer.

“I began haunting newspaper offices and asking whether they needed anybody. They all gave me “no” for an answer. One day I talked to a man who told me I should go to some small paper like the *Chicago Globe*. I did this, but had no better luck.

“My mother died this fall, and I was absolutely alone and forlorn.

“That winter I met a girl. She was a clerk in a department store, quite simple and beautiful. We fell in love with each other. She brought me the stimulus I needed. I had saved about \$60. I resolved to quit the business game for good and all and jump into the stream. In May, 1891, I resigned; I would starve or get into newspaper work.

“Well, I hung around newspaper offices till I was as well known as a lost dog. At length I met a man who helped me. John Maxwell was

the copy-reader for the *Chicago Globe*; a big man seemingly cynical and contemptuous of everything, not excepting me, but underneath his rough exterior he was all genial kindness and sweetness. He saw me one day and asked me about my life. I told him everything and he began by saying that the newspaper game was not worth anything; but if I wanted to get into it I easily could. There was a great National Democratic Convention coming on in June; I ought to get work then. He got the *Globe* to give me a trial and told me to go and get all the facts I could about the Democratic Convention.

"I remember that a dinner was being given to a Senator from South Carolina. It seemed that he was "the dark horse" and might be elected instead of Cleveland. I happened to say in the auditorium that he ought to be elected, in my opinion. I had no reason for it; I just said it to show an original point of view. Standing near me was a large man in a light suit. He immediately introduced himself to me as the Senator in question and asked me to come up to his room. I went with him; I remember that his room had a balcony with a window looking over the lake. He said: 'I can tell you things and will. You were good enough to mention me, but to-night at midnight Cleveland will be elected; the Convention which is now in session has fixed that. Take my name to the secretary

of Mr. W. C. Whitney and tell him I sent you; he'll give you all details.'

"I thanked him and did as I was told and got the scoop. I ran to the *Globe* office and told John Maxwell. He said: 'Sit down and write it!' I did write it and he fixed it up, re-writing a good deal of it himself. The two columns made a sensation, but when I saw the story in print I saw that it was Maxwell's work that had made it and not mine.

"Then I came across another writer, John C. McInnins; he drank like a fish, but took a fancy to me. He gave me the idea of writing up the fake auction shops and told me I could drive them out of business. They began by trying to bribe me. One gave me a gold watch, another \$100, to be let alone. I handed over the watch and the money to the police and my articles got all the shops closed up.

"Next year the World's Fair was to be held in St. Louis. I obtained an introduction to Joseph B. McCullough of the *Globe-Democrat*, and he gave me work at \$20 a week. I had only a poor bedroom, and so I spent all day in the office, which turned out to be a very fortunate thing for me.

"I was not earning my money, when one day a real estate man came into the office who said he had just come from Chicago and had seen a big wreck on the Alton railway; the train was burn-

ing and a reporter ought to be sent out at once. I decided to go myself. There happened to be an oil train on the next siding, and just as I got on the spot the fire reached the oil and there was a terrific explosion; thirty-two people were killed and I had seen it happen.

"I wired a rough sketch to the city editor and asked him to send me down an artist; then I went back wondering whether I should be praised or "fired," I was still so nervous about myself.

"McCullough was a little fat Irishman, brusque in manner but kindly. Some years later he committed suicide. He always sat at his desk with a circle of papers strewn all round him; the moment he had looked through one he threw it on the floor. As soon as I got back I was sent for by him. I went to his presence in fear and trembling, but he quickly reassured me.

"'You have done a fine piece of work,' he said. 'From now on you get \$25 a week, and here is a small present for you for your initiative,' and he gave me \$50 in cash. I just went out and turned hand-springs all over St. Louis. A little later the dramatic editor resigned and I decided to ask for the place. I waylaid McCullough as he entered the building, but could hardly get the words out:

"'Would you let me try to be dramatic editor?' I asked.

"He looked at me and snapped: 'All right; you are the dramatic editor,' and went on.

"I had already tried to write poetry and now I wrote a sensational comedy and a comic opera, but neither of them came to anything and they finally got lost.

"I made up my mind to go to New York and I arrived in Manhattan Island by way of Toledo and Pittsburgh in 1894.

"I got on the *World* by an accident. I went down to the *World* office and was waiting about when Arthur Brisbane, then a middle-aged man, with light sandy hair passed. He looked at me and asked me who I was. I told him my name was Dreiser and I wanted a job. He took me over to a man called Quail and said: 'Give him a desk and an assignment.'

"I failed lamentably on the *World*. The great city scared me stiff. I was told to go and interview Russell Sage about something. They might as well have asked me to interview St. Peter. Then there was a fight in the Hoffman House between two sports—well-known men both—Whitneys or Vanderbilts, I forget the names. I went up but could not for the life of me go in and speak to the manager. I was too shy. Fancy, David Graham Phillips and Richard Harding Davis had just left the *World*, and in comparison with such masters I failed absolutely.

"I should have come to utter grief at twenty-three or twenty-four if it had not been for the fact that my brother was an actor and wrote popular songs. He was a good many years older than I was and I used to hang around his office. At this time he was trying to bring out a paper. I went to Brentano's and found some English and French papers—*Pick-me-up*, *Le Rire*, *Truth*. I saw that they were new, thought they would catch on. I helped my brother with his paper and we had a certain success. I worked on it for two years and learned the business.

"About this time I read the 'Data of Ethics' and 'First Principles' of Herbert Spencer. They nearly killed me, took every shred of belief away from me; showed me that I was a chemical atom in a whirl of unknown forces; the realization clouded my mind. I felt the rhythm of life, but the central fact to me was that the whole thing was unknowable—incomprehensible. I went into the depths and I am not sure that I have ever got entirely out of them. I have not much of a creed—certainly no happy or inspiring belief to this day.

"But the other side of me had grown too. In St. Louis I had met a very lovely girl—religious, thoughtful, well-read. I married her in 1898, and that year I wrote 'Sister Carrie,' when I was twenty-seven, my wife helping me a great deal.

"In half a year I realized that for me mar-

riage was a disaster. At the end of the first year and a half it had become a torture. It was a binding state and I was not to be bound. My wife was good and kind and all the rest of it, but tied to her I could not get any good out of matrimony. I was afraid I'd go mad. I begged her to set me free and she did."

These are the chief formative incidents of Dreiser's life and they tell us, I think, a good deal about his nature and his environment. First of all, he would not have been helped in his newspaper work in any European country as he was helped in America; then his shyness with girls and his fear of failure in life show a long continued immaturity.

Such slowness of growth and youthful ineffectiveness are very rare, I imagine, in men of great intellectual power. Nearly all the men who have made a name in literature or art have been distinguished by extraordinary precocity; but I see no reason for this in the nature of things and I am inclined to believe that those destined to grow for many years usually grow slowly at first like oak trees.

Now to give some idea of the man as he is to-day and especially of his mind.

First of all he is a radical in politics, as are most men who think for themselves. As is natural, he is for complete freedom in art and literature.

The treatment accorded to his first book, "Sister Carrie," was bad enough to make a Liberal of anyone.

The book was written between October, 1899, and May, 1900. He sent it to Harper & Brothers, who rejected it. Then it was taken to Doubleday, Page & Co., who accepted it and drew up a contract giving Dreiser fifteen per cent. as a royalty. Frank Norris was their reader at the time. Walter H. Page wrote Dreiser a letter congratulating him on the book.

But Mrs. Doubleday did not approve of the book, and so it was condemned. Norris suggested that Doubleday should be held to his contract, and Dreiser followed his counsel. Years later Thomas H. McKee, who was then Doubleday's attorney, told Dreiser that the firm came to him for advice how best to suppress the book. He told them to publish a given number of copies and put them in their cellar. This they did. Outside a few copies sent by Norris to reviewers, not one was given out or sold. The only hearing the book received was in England where Heinemann issued it the following year (1901). It was an immediate and unqualified success.

Dreiser's books brought him again and again into conflict with the lewd puritanism which is the disgrace and curse of American life.

In 1914 his novel, "The Titan," was accepted by Harper's. An edition of ten thousand was

printed and then the book was thrown back on the author's hands to be disposed of as he might think fit. Someone or other regarded it, too, as immoral. Dreiser has never been able to learn even the name of his critic.

Only the other day the infamous Society for the Suppression of Vice proceeded against his latest book, "The Genius," frightened the publisher out of his wits and thereby robbed Dreiser of nearly all the pecuniary results of two years' labor. I say "robbed" advisedly, for when this vile society is defeated in the law-courts it never even attempts to make reparation to its innocent victims.

More recently still, in the winter of 1917, a four-act tragedy Dreiser had written was refused by his present publishers, not on the ground that it was immoral, but that it was "too terrible." Too terrible for the shallow surface optimism of America.

Dreiser is one of the first writers and thinkers in the country: we punish him or allow him to be punished for doing the best in him, for giving us of his best with utmost effort of brain and heart. This is a symptom of mortal disease in the body corporate. The mere idea will make most people smile; American civilization condemned because a Dreiser is mulcted in a couple of thousand dollars for writing "The Genius!" Ha! ha! ha! and again, Ho! ho!

It seems to me that the teaching of history on this matter is unequivocal. No nation can persecute its prophets without paying the penalty.

We all know how the Jews treated their prophets; they were warned on the highest authority that such conduct would bring ruin on them: *Your houses shall be left unto you desolate.* The prediction has been duly fulfilled.

But now to return to Dreiser. He stands for freedom in its widest sense and toleration to the extreme. He loves liberty perhaps too much to advocate doles to struggling men of letters or to the widows of writers and their orphans such as are provided in Great Britain; but he would have no serious objection to such charitable assistance. In any case he would hardly look on this charity as a duty and a most important duty of the State. That is to say he is an American and has but a vague conception of an ordered and highly organized State, such as alone can survive in the world-competition of the future. He thinks that all he has a right to ask is freedom to live his own life, think his own thoughts and write as he likes, and he is exasperated by finding his freedom to write curtailed by the vulgar prejudice of a society of lewd busy-bodies led by an unscrupulous hypocrite.

Now what are his thoughts on the deepest questions? He has come through the Slough of Despond as Christian did, but has he found firm

ground on the other side? Is he one of the bringers of light sacred forever or is he content to stumble about in darkness unilluminated? He tells me that he can see no object in things—no goal; nor in the life of man any purpose; certainly no moral purpose or plan. Acts have their consequences which he is willing to believe are logical, though he is far from sure even of that; often the results of slight errors are so dreadful as to suggest malevolence. We men are malevolent often; why not the Maker of men?

Eat, drink, work and be merry, therefore, for to-morrow you die, seems to me a fair summary of his belief, which indeed is the comfortless creed of a majority of his countrymen—“*on evil days now fallen and evil tongues.*”

It is to Dreiser's credit and the credit of our long-suffering and resilient human nature that his despairing outlook on life does not make him cruel or indifferent to others' suffering or indeed unduly depressed and melancholy. He takes the goods the gods send and is fairly content so long as health and strength endure; a good dinner and good talk are good things, and a girl's lips and the surrender in her eyes can make a new heaven and a new earth for him. That is, Dreiser is in fairly true relation to the centre of gravity of this world even if he has no notion how the centre is changing and whither this solid globe itself is moving with all that it inhabit.

And so he is a fair and interesting critic of other men's work and a helpful influence, this robust, healthy, sincere and outspoken man, Dreiser.

He thinks both Twain and Dickens negligible, and he does not admire Emerson or Whitman wholeheartedly, much less will he admit that my admiration of David Graham Phillips is well-founded. Here his criticism is that of a creator; he says:

"David Graham Phillips often sketches a character and then loses hold of it and in the course of the narration allows another soul to enter in and possess the name."

"What novel do you refer to?" I challenged.

"Old Wives for New," he replied, "the heroine changes completely."

"I don't agree with you," was all I could say. "Your point is often just, but it does not apply to Phillips in my opinion," and then I carried the war into his country.

"Why have you repeated yourself?" I asked.

"It is a sign of poverty, surely."

"Have I?" he asked. "Where?"

"Jenny Gerhardt," I said, "is only a better 'Sister Carrie'; then you have done 'The Financier' and 'The Titan,' two books to give the one figure of 'The Millionaire.'"

"I'm going to do another on him," he growled; "and why not?"

"No reason," I retorted, "save that it is a mere replica or copy."

"I don't agree with you," he said stoutly; "it is a development."

"And then the faults in the drawing," I went on in a flank attack, "weaken or rather destroy faith in you. True, the figure of the 'Millionaire' is one of the few generic figures of our time; a figure that should be painted once for all; Sancho Panza throned and triumphant; but you've been too true to life; too realistic."

"How do you make that out?" he dissented.

"You send your millionaire to prison in 'The Financier,'" I went on; "that showed me you were probably drawing him from life, for financiers as a rule don't go to prison in the United States. The incident is so improbable that as a matter of art it is worse than untrue. I made some inquiries and found that Yerkes had been sent to prison in Philadelphia; altogether too greedy as a young man, even for American tolerance. As soon as I read in 'The Titan' that your financier after his release went west to Chicago and worked to get the street-car system into his control, I knew my guess was right and you had taken Yerkes for your model, for it is almost as unlikely that a great financier should go west as it is that he should be imprisoned. Great financiers in America are attracted to the east—to New York—the biggest market with the

largest prizes, draws irresistibly. Accordingly your books seem true to life and not to art in these particulars, for art is life generalized a little."

"I would not have believed," he interrupted, "that any critic in another country could have drawn such subtle and true deductions, you are quite right, I had Yerkes in my mind as a model when I wrote 'The Financier' and 'The Titan.'"

"In 'The Titan,' too," I continued, "towards the end I recognized the original of the girl who won the hero."

"I dare say," Dreiser admitted laughing.

"There is no mistake in taking the girl from life," I cried, "but sending your model financier to prison was a blunder, was it not?"

"I see what you mean," he said thoughtfully, "and perhaps you are right. I am not convinced."

"The financier," I went on, pressing the point, "is always a master of everyday life; he would make no mistake in dealing with it."

"What do you think of the books in other respects?" he asked.

"They are vivid," I replied, "and there's a splendid love-story in 'The Financier'; but I don't think your portrait of the millionaire will live. You have not made large sums of money yourself or you would have painted him differently. You have not given us even his enor-

mous urge or driving power which is also his chief weakness. It would take too long to explain. Your picture is much the same as the one Claretie gave us in 'Le Million' thirty years ago."

Dreiser bore my criticism very well, I thought. I wanted him to see that in Europe the best literary criticism is of enormous assistance to the true artist; for it keeps him on stretch, forces him to dig deep into himself to find the pure ore of human nature. Had "Sister Carrie" been produced in London the author's next books would have shown distinct growth, I believe, because "Sister Carrie" would have been praised so warmly and yet with such penetrating discrimination that its author would have been encouraged at once and nerved to do even better than his best.

Dreiser told me what indeed anyone might have guessed that "Sister Carrie" met with a cold reception on the whole, and the few who praised, did so in fear and dread of puritanic condemnation. Sister Carrie gave herself without the sanction of marriage, and, a worse feature still, succeeded in life by reason of her lapses instead of being "ruined" as puritanism would have it, and accordingly the book was condemned in the United States because of the vital truth in it.

I have gone into this matter at some length because I wish to show how the outworn puri-

tanic creed still injures all works of literary art in America and is apt, too, to injure if not to ruin the artist.

The atmosphere here is far more blighting than it is even in England, and yet for nearly a century now English prudery has prevented the publication of any novel which could be regarded as a masterpiece and read all over Europe. In the public interest our prudery and puritanism must be fought. Of course, the Author's League should have taken up arms for Mr. Dreiser long ago and defended him against the idiotic attacks of the self-styled Society for the Suppression of Vice; but it looks as if the Authors' League here as in Great Britain was only devised to provide berths for half a dozen mediocrities.

Meanwhile the great writers suffer. Walt Whitman was hounded out of Washington and lost his post there, was ostracised, indeed, for twenty-five years, and Dreiser has been attacked and punished for writing above the heads of the crowd. Yet he is full of hope and high purpose with half a dozen books in hand; a volume of essays, a philosophic work setting forth the outlines at least of his creed, the third book of the trilogy on the millionaire and other novels.

All these projects and endeavors simply go to prove how indefatigable and unconquerable a man is when he is lucky enough or wise enough

to have found his true work and to be able to do it.

When we thwart him, ours is the loss. We have only had a half product from Dreiser—a thought which sometimes depresses me, though the great public does not seem to mind much.

Even now I find I have said little about Mr. Dreiser's latest book, "The Genius," and not a word about his plays, and yet they both deserve careful consideration.

"The Genius"—what a title! It quite excited me to think beforehand how one would try to make "A Genius" real and recognizable to the reader. Dreiser put his title "The Genius" in inverted commas, I imagine, in sincere doubt whether this animated embodiment of himself or at least reflection of some of his strongest desires and feelings was really a possessor of the divine spark?

The lady novelist usually paints her hero as superbly handsome, brave and gentle, and then throws in the remark—"he was besides a man of genius." But it takes a little more than that to convince us of genius. The novelist who takes his art seriously is bound to realize his praise; he must at least show us the genius acting or talking as no one but a genius could act or talk. This Dreiser has failed to do, has not even tried to do.

His hero made up in almost equal parts of sexual desire and love of art is an interesting

person enough; but just genius is lacking to him in my poor opinion. He is not dynamic or extraordinary in any way. Why then call him a "genius," even in inverted commas? The soul of genius is a constant striving towards the light, like a flower pushing its way up through black encumbering earth and even through crevices of stone to air and sunlight.

Growth is the birthmark of genius, a perpetual thirst for a larger, richer life. Dreiser's "Genius" appears to go from girl to girl lured by youth and beauty without any further or higher selection whatsoever. Of course, the sex desire has eyes chiefly for beauty and youth, but in other respects it is not blind. Just in the case of genius there is a seeking after a new experience, a more womanly woman and this groping desire is guided by the aesthetic impulse which demands ever richer nourishment.

The sex-life of a genius is of the most intense interest. Shakespeare has given us three great pictures of it; romantic love in "Romeo and Juliet," mature passion in "Antony and Cleopatra," lust and jealousy in "Othello," and Goethe has given one in the Gretchen episode in "Faust" of equal value, just as Dante has given another; but the sex-life of an ordinary intelligence is of slight concern, and accordingly I don't admire "The Genius" of Dreiser greatly.

One of his plays, "The Girl in the Coffin,"

interested me infinitely more; it gives a great stage-picture; is true to life, too, and yet preaches forgiveness for sex-sins superbly.

Now what may be expected from Dreiser? Is he going on from strength to strength till he fulfils himself in some masterpiece or shall we get from him only a half-product, another "Sister Carrie," of great promise and half performance?

I cannot tell; I can only hope for the best. Usually the master who has a great deal to say is at first careless, as Balzac was, of how he says it, and grows more and more particular about form as he grows older. But I don't see any growth in Dreiser in this direction. Some of his letters are excellently written; but in his books he is often careless. Even in the portraits of his father and mother, in "A Hoosier's Holiday," all steeped in love though they are, there is little or no verbal music; his brush-strokes even are not studied; he repeats himself in successive clauses: "A great poet-mother, a great-hearted mother," without a reason or rather in spite of reason: he compares his father to "Saint Simon or Francis of Assisi," and one pauses in shocked bewilderment; which Saint Simon does he mean? In any case, these two examples are of contrasting type. I could give many instances of similar blunders. There are whole pages in every book of Dreiser's so badly written that

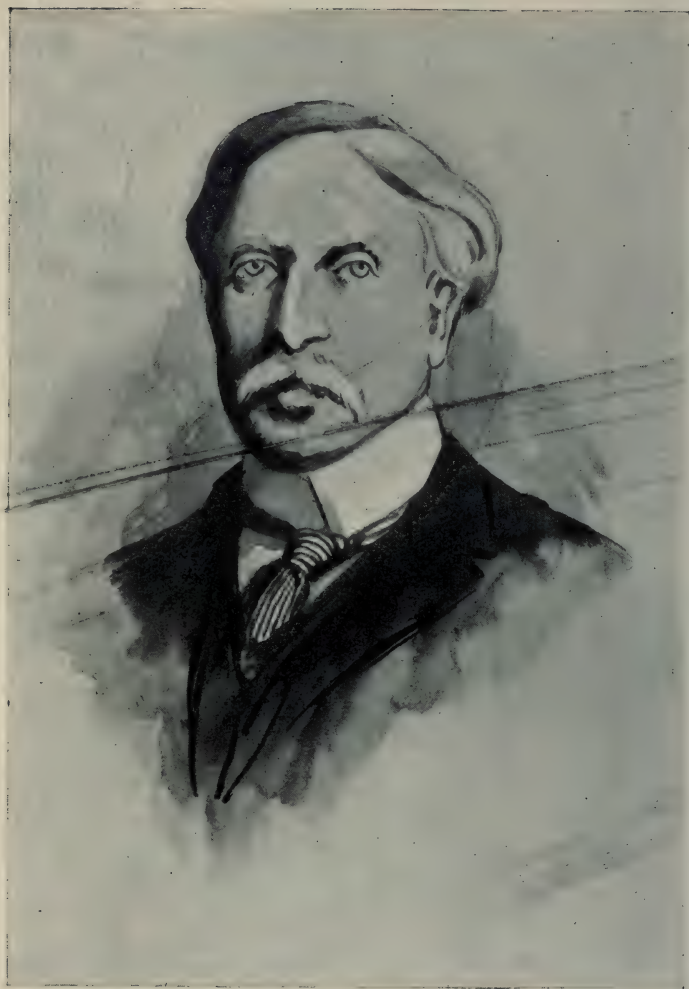
they affect me like gravel-grit in my mouth and I am not inclined to over-estimate mere verbal felicity. Worst of all, I feel perpetually that Dreiser might write so much better than he does if he would but try to do his best; he has the gift—why not the ideal? I am constrained to think it is the German paste in him that makes him so blind to the beauty of words.

His latest play, "The Potter's Hand," testifies to even a worse fault, what Goethe called the lack of architectural or structural symmetry. The protagonist of the play is an erotomaniac who rapes and murders a little girl and at last commits suicide. Dreiser brings out all the tragedy of the poor creature's insane and miserable existence; and we read it with terror and pity. It is plain that with the suicide the action finishes and the interest is at an end, but Dreiser drags in reporters to moralize the situation in a way that would be intolerable to any audience; the tragedy is thereby rendered formless. It would almost seem as if Dreiser were incapable of self-criticism.

There they are before me, his eight stout volumes, and reluctantly I am forced to admit that so far "Sister Carrie," his earliest book, is his best. Of course, the critics and the public as well as the writer are to blame for this imperfect result; but explain, excuse it as you will, the fact is indubitable: and no explanation can justify

such a fact; Browning tells us truly that "Incentives come from the soul's self."

Genius has always the faculty of taking infinite pains. When Shelley pointed out to Keats some weak lines in his "Endymion," Keats thanked him and added: "I want to fill the rifts with gold." That's the true spirit magnificently expressed. In the Pantheon of Humanity there is no place for the careless or slipshod; our gods are all human yet all give us of their best, and so, as Burns knew, "whiles do mair."



George Moore

GEORGE MOORE AND JESUS



HAVE never written a word about George Moore, never criticized a book of his, never mentioned him or discussed his work in print, and yet I have known him longer than I have known any other man of letters; known him fairly intimately for over thirty-five years.

I have never had a quarrel with him. I admire some of his books—particularly “The Mummer’s Wife” and “Esther Waters,” and enjoy “The Confessions,” and have told him so; and even more than his books I admire the singleness of purpose and persistence with which he has prosecuted literature and developed his writing talent, and yet he has never interested me deeply, never touched my emotions or quickened my thought; never been to me one of the wine-bearers at the banquet of life.

And this I say, not as lessening him, but as my own confession and apology. When young I believed with all my heart that poverty was the greatest evil in the world; that the dreadful inequality of human conditions would have to be righted, brought more into accord with our ideas of justice before any great work of art

would even be possible. I think now I was mistaken in this; but my belief is tenable, easily defensible.

Moore, on the other hand, took no heed of the social misery; was not interested in the anarchy of individualism; cared nothing for any socialistic remedy; professed himself indifferent to Utopia and was frankly bored when one talked of the humanisation of man in society. Even at twenty-five he was purely a writer—a novelist of the modern realistic school.

Moore's person was so peculiar as to pin him in the memory: he was fairly tall, about five feet ten or thereabouts, with sloping bottle-shoulders and heavy hips. His face was pallid like pork, set off with rufous drooping moustache, while reddish fair hair waved away from a high, broad forehead. He always seemed to me slightly flaccid, weak, inclined to fat; but when I try to explain this inference I can only recall the fact that his hands were podgy white and he was perpetually gesticulating with white fingers that looked effeminate, soft. After his too fair complexion, his eyes impressed one; very prominent, round, pale blue; observant, enquiring eyes, they seemed to me, neither receptive nor profound; the mouth ordinary, the nose a good long rudder, prominent enough to suggest vanity and rather fleshy, a sensuous but

steering Jewish nose softened still further by fleshy soft jaws and small mound of chin.

He would come into the office of *The London Evening News*, of which I was at that time the Managing Editor, and talk interminably; but always of literature, usually of Zola or some one of Zola's novels or opinions. Whatever the Frenchman had written was sacred in Moore's eyes: Zola filled his mental horizon, was his god; his writings his Gospel. Occasionally he would talk of Monet or Manet or Degas; but one soon realized that his opinion of painters and pictures was a second-hand opinion, an opinion soaked up from intercourse with those artists themselves or with still younger masters.

Moore was always interesting to me because he was always interested in what he had to say—enthusiastic even; his voice was pleasant, a tenor voice fairly modulated and rhythmical; but neither his eyes nor his voice was so expressive as his gestures, the fingers, antennae-like, meeting and separating in front of your eyes, seeking, probing, hesitating—extraordinarily indicative of an inquisitive, curious intelligence. He had excellent manners, never intruding or obtrusive, considerate always of others; the manners and dress, too, of good society; yet without a trace of affectation or snobbishness. Moore was genuinely interested in men of letters and literary topics and able to converse with them or about them, showing always a slight

agreeable preference for monologue, monologue about himself and his literary plans and preferences.

The first trait of his character which struck me was his extraordinary moderation; he didn't seem to care for eating or drinking, and was always as moderate in both as a Spaniard or a Greek. To his wonderful sobriety he owes his almost perfect health.

He never seemed to exercise, did not even take the usual "constitutional" walk; yet he was always fit and well; could walk through a long day's shooting and was an excellent shot, as I found out once when he came to stay with me near Eridge Castle to shoot over some ground belonging to Lord Abergavenny. I mention this simply to show that he had all the qualifications of the English country gentleman, yet just because he was a writer with a love of letters and knowledge of art, English society which is "sporting" and "horsey" in the extreme or "barbarian," as Matthew Arnold called it, regarded him with suspicion and aversion as not true to type. One day when out shooting, Moore was accidentally hit by a glancing pellet; instead of covering the sportsman's want of skill or care with silence the occasion was used for a rude gibe.

"What could Moore expect when he went out shooting with gentlemen?" a double-edged sneer

which I persisted in construing to Moore's advantage.

Moore's character was full of surprises even to one acquainted with every variety of the English man of letters. His wonderful sobriety came first; then perhaps his wide knowledge of sports and country life in general, and finally his keen business faculty and appreciation of all the uses of advertisement. He never offered articles on any subject without payment, though men of letters in general are full of over-ripe enthusiasms for this or that cause or person, and eager to display their tastes in print.

Moore was an enthusiastic admirer of the modern French school of writing and painting; would hold forth about the masters by the hour, yet as soon as one said, "Write it, Moore; such an article would be interesting," he would reply—"All right; but what will you pay for it?"

And when it came to terms he was a stickler for the uttermost farthing. Not even in this case, however, did he go beyond the conventional gentlemanly insistence. He was never aggressive; always suave and conciliatory. If you could pay his price he was willing to write for you; if not, he would not write, but was nevertheless friendly, even amiable. He was very precise about delivering his copy at the agreed upon time; finicky only about correcting and recorrecting proofs; preferring this cadence

to that, this turn of expression to that, an artist in polishing the already smooth-filed line.

In this scruple one peculiarity marked him; he would fall in love with a word and try to drag it into his prose by hook or by crook. He says somewhere, I think in this "Confessions" that he used to "learn unusual words and stick them in here and there"; but he does not tell what sort of word he preferred. Let me fill the gap.

I remember when shooting with me in Sussex he heard "shaw" for the first time used to describe a small wood or covert.

"What a beautiful word," he cried, "exquisite—a 'shaw'," and for some time afterwards "shaw" appeared again and again in his writing.

The curious thing about Moore's predilection for this or that new word was that he did not care for the meaning of the word, but for its sound and color. Every master of prose loves words and is scrupulous to employ them in their exact meaning. Words, like coins, grow lighter in the using. The master of words, like a new monarch, issues them afresh from his mint of full weight, stamped with his authority. But Moore cared nothing for the derivation of a word or its true meaning. In his latest book, as in his earliest, he is not disdainful merely of scholarship—he ignores it.

On page 175 of "The Brook Kerith" he speaks

of "shards of shells or pottery." He does not know that "shard" is short for "potsherd," and if he knew he would not care. He is in love with the sound or color of the word "shard" and accordingly writes on page 169 of "some broken ruins, shards of an old castle apparently tenantless," bewildering the ordinary reader who knows what "shard" means. The impression Moore means to convey is often confused in this fashion or blunted by his misuse of words. An even better instance may be given, taken at hap-hazard from the book under my hand, at the moment, "The Apostle." On meeting Jesus, Paul says:

"Thy face is not unstrange to me, yet I have never been among these hills before." Moore does not know that "unstrange" must be nearly equivalent to "familiar"; the neologism "unstrange" pleased him and he stuck it in! The truth is Moore's early training in Paris as a painter has corrupted his taste in words. It has led him again and again to seek for the pictorial quality of a word or scene, which is hardly an effect proper to literature, though much prized by the illiterate.

To return to my immediate theme. Moore knew by instinct all the myriad uses of advertisement. He used to say, "Attack me as you please; slang me, but write about me. I'd rather have a libelous article than silence; indeed, I

think slander more effective than eulogy. If you hate my books, say so, please, at length; that will get me readers."

He rivaled Oscar Wilde in his love of advertisement, knew almost every newspaper office in London, and kept the doors ajar by frequent visits. Verily, he has had his reward.

I have lived through most of Moore's wild enthusiasms from Zola to Turgenief. I remember meeting him one day when he would talk of nothing but Flaubert. Flaubert was the greatest writer France had ever produced; an impeccable artist without fault or flaw—superlative on superlative. I could only smile—another god!

Had I read "L'Education Sentimentale"?

I had and did not prize it greatly. Gently I reminded Moore of his previous infatuation for Zola. He confessed mournfully.

"How I could ever have admired that farthing dip when the sun of Flaubert was lighting the heavens and warming the earth, I can't imagine. One's aberrations are astonishing. One changes not every seven years as the physiologists say, but every three years or so. Zola! He has no style. Even his name is tawdry and common to me now; but Flaubert, Flaubert, Flaubert!"

"Have you ever read his letters?" I asked. "They are really superb—especially those to

George Sand. He talks of Shakespeare with passionate admiration, as 'an ocean.' "

"Does he really?" wondered Moore. "I've never read Shakespeare—know nothing about him. Is he really great?"

Moore's reading was always fragmentary—peculiar. At that time he hadn't read Shakespeare or the Bible or indeed any of the English or world classics. He read solely what he liked or thought he would like; the world of writers began and ended for him with the Frenchmen of the last half of the nineteenth century.

It was, I believe, my outspoken preference for Balzac over Flaubert that set him reading "*La Comedie Humaine*," consecutively, and even after he had written his essay on Balzac he had not read "*Le Curé de Tours*," which is the supreme example of Balzac's artistry. But as soon as he heard of it, he read it and discussed it with some understanding in the final revision of his essay.

Moore's ignorance was the standard joke wherever men of letters congregated. He had spent years as a boy in a Roman Catholic college, he said; but I always wondered where it could have been till I saw in a paper that he left it in his "very early teens" because he "refused to go to confession." He has made up for his recalcitrance since by confessing himself and his fleshly sins in print whenever he could get the

opportunity. But his ignorances were abysmal, like those of a king, incomprehensible to anyone who had had ordinary schooling.

Moore's mind seemed incapable of grasping the elementary facts of grammar. He was always confusing "shall" and "will" and "should" and "would."

I often asked myself how his boundless contempt for knowledge of all sorts could coexist with a genuine talent for expression and a very real love of literature. The enigmas of Moore's character are insoluble.

For example, his enthusiasm for great writers did not reach to his contemporaries. Even in "The Confessions" he belittles every man of genius of his time: Meredith bores him; Browning is devoid of "Latin sensuality and subtlety"; Hardy hasn't "a ray of genius"; Henry James and Howells are mere copyists. Yet Browning and Meredith were greater than Zola or Flaubert or Turgenieff, and one cannot understand Moore's prejudices unless one regards him as taking a French view of English writers. He never even mentions those who might be considered his rivals save to sneer or denigrate. What is his real opinion of Shaw or Wilde or Wells? His criticism is mainly carping, the petty faultfinding of envy.

It was Moore's boldness in handling sex matters that gave him popularity and position.

More than once he reached the limit beyond which prosecution threatened. Smith's book stalls, which correspond to the American News Company in these United States, refused to sell one of his early books. Moore at once attacked the tradesman-censor and heaped ridicule on the salesman and his morals. Mudie, too, a bookstore with much the same position in London that Brentano holds in New York, put some novel of Moore's on the index. At once he slanged Mudie and found amusing words for the book-provider to the middle-class household! This perpetual attack and defense won him his following, but as Moore is the last man in the world to play Don Quixote, it is important to know why he came into conflict so often with Puritanic prudery.

Again I have to explain his idiosyncratic boldness by his Paris training. Zola was his first master and he knew perfectly well that Zola's sex novels, such as "Nana" and "La Terre," were best sellers. Moreover, to give Moore his due, he divined from his own experience that the questions of sex are the perpetually interesting questions. Had he been oversexed he would certainly have got into serious trouble through his writings; but his astonishing moderation in desire saved him here as in life. Even as a young man he was perpetually declaring that women were overrated; that no sensible man

would put his finger into danger for one, let alone his life or future, or even his work.

"Woman is the sauce to the pudding of life, if you like; but the whole business of love and loving is vastly overrated."

In consequence all his references to sex matters are at once French in directness of expression and free of passion—curiously cool, indeed, and matter-of-fact—and therefore void of seduction and of offense.

By temperament Moore is as incapable of writing a great love scene as Arnold Bennett himself. And yet women form ninety-nine per cent of his readers.

At length I am forced to reveal the heart of him; whoever realizes his astounding moderation has only to join with it two incidents in order to know the man. He told me once of a supper he was at in his early days in London. Lord Rossmore, a handsome, devil-may-care Irishman, whom Moore knew well, was of the party. Derry Rossmore drank too much, grew a little loud and contradicted Moore. Moore, who was perfectly sober, debated coolly how he might turn the dispute to his profit. He resolved to get Derry to be rude to him again and then knock him down. The row and consequent duel, he thought, would be a splendid advertisement for him. Accordingly he moved an empty champagne bottle just within comfortable reach

of his right hand and provoked Derry. Derry insulted him as Moore guessed he would, and at once Moore picked up the champagne bottle and knocked Rossmore down with it.

The story surprised me so that I asked him, "You did it just for the advertisement?"

"Yes," he replied coolly, "and I failed to get it. The duel never came off. I was greatly disappointed, ha! ha!"

Moore's business instincts were most astonishingly developed.

The other incident is much better known.

When Moore went to Dublin some years ago he took a house, and a lady was kind enough to help him in getting the furniture and fittings in order and continued her ministrations afterwards to the detriment of her reputation. In process of time the pair drifted apart. Soon afterwards the lady married a well-known Dublin architect; and a little later, died. Moore has told the whole story in one of his books; confessed the liaison and described the lady so minutely that even the dead woman's husband could have no doubt as to her identity.

D'Annunzio did the same thing in "*Il Fuoco*"—told the story of his love for the Duse; described her minutely and gave away the secrets of intimacy; but D'Annunzio might plead the driving force of a great passion and the necessity of realizing the ebb and flow of extravagant

desire; but Moore's indiscretion had not even that excuse; he knew the revelation would make people talk—be an excellent advertisement and that was all. As a lady said, "Some men kiss and tell; others like George Moore don't kiss and tell all the same."

Still if he has done anything that will live, he may yet get the better of detraction and disdain. But has he? His admirers cite "The Mummer's Wife" and "Esther Waters"; "Impressions"; "The Confessions of a Young Man"; but has any one been tempted to read any of these books twice? Yet it is only the books we read and re-read a dozen times which stand any chance of surviving. I cannot believe that any of Moore's books so far are in that category. But his new book is about Jesus and if he has written anything valuable on that theme, he will have a sponsor through the ages and may defy oblivion. It would be strange indeed if his best work like that of his compatriot and fellow pagan, Oscar Wilde, should be inspired by the Man of Sorrows and his tragic story.

For that reason I devoured "The Brook Kerith" and promised to write about it before I had read it. Had I known what was in it, I should never have dreamt of writing about it. It is my custom to write only of books that I love; the others—commonplace or vulgar or vile—may all be left as alms to oblivion. But I

had promised in this case, and besides Moore is an interesting person in several respects and "The Brook Kerith" has been so bepraised on all hands in America that it is almost a duty to tell the truth about it and its innocent eulogists.

The *New York Times*, of course, one expected to be fulsome; but Mr. Littell or Q. K. in the *New Republic* outdoes the *Times*; he asserts that "The Brook Kerith" shows Mr. Moore "at his best," and dares even to speak of Moore "steeping himself in the earliest records and the labors of scholars," while "his curiosity and sympathy created and re-created the life of Jesus in many forms." And then Q. K.'s praise becomes lyrical; he speaks of the book as "organically composed—the ripening fruit of a long preoccupation," and so forth and so on, in phrases that would have been overstatements if they had been applied to Renan's "Life of Jesus." And my friend, William Marion Reedy, is almost as enthusiastic. He begins a four-column article with "Consummate artist in the main, Mr. George Moore has a curious trick of putting a smear upon everything he touches. There are two or three such smears in 'The Brook Kerith'" This seems more or less sensible. But he concludes by wondering "if Mr. Moore's deluded Jesus is less or more pathetic than our Biblical Jesus," which to me is the most extravagant

praise, the most utterly preposterous comparison I have ever seen in print.

It seems to me a first principle that no one has any business to write a Life of Jesus unless he can beat Renan's and Renan took all pains to make himself worthy of his great task. He was a first rate Greek and Hebrew scholar, a life-long student of exegesis, versed in all the minutiae of German scholarship. He vivified his knowledge, too, by living in Palestine for years. Moreover, he was by temperament and training passionately religious and gifted with one of the most exquisite, seductive styles in all French prose. This priest and artist, student and writer gave his life to the work of re-creating Jesus, and in my opinion and in the opinion of others better qualified to judge, he succeeded—to a certain extent. His life is the best biography of Jesus which has appeared since John, the beloved disciple, finished his account. No one living is capable of surpassing Renan's work; the utmost a great writer could do would be to mark the points of difference or restrict himself as Bernard Shaw has restricted himself to saying as briefly as possible just what he feels about Christ. I admit I am prejudiced against Moore's book before I open it. None the less, he shall have fair play if I can give it to him.

Some few years ago I met Moore casually in London and he came to me with much the old

eagerness. "The very man I wanted to see," he cried. "I have just read your 'Miracle of the Stigmata'—a good story. Where did you get the idea that Jesus did not die on the Cross? That's very interesting to me, very."

Moore had changed greatly in the years which had passed since we last met; his hair was silver, and the wave of it had receded a little, leaving a noble expanse of brow; but the eyes were nearly as young as ever and the unwrinkled skin and the carmine flush on the white cheeks would have graced a girl of eighteen. It may be the violent who take Heaven by storm, but it is the moderate who preserve their hair and health! Moore had grown a little more podgy than aforetime; but he has height to carry it off, and he really looked venerable with his crown of silver hair. The moment he began to speak I remarked his gestures with the white expressive fingers. He was the old Moore all right, and, as usual, was hugely interested in what he was saying.

"I'm glad you liked my story," I remarked, and was about to move on when—

"I want to talk to you about it," he insisted. "I think you missed a great opportunity, a unique opportunity [the fingers made little graceful whorls before my eyes]. You should have made Paul meet Jesus; that's the drama, you understand—"

As Moore has again and again tried and failed to write a drama that would keep the stage a week, I smiled.

"Why don't you write it?" I said and again tried to get away.

"I think of doing it," he said gravely. "It's a great idea. I don't want anyone else to exploit it first; but I can't make up my mind whether to write a play or a book about it."

"Why not both?" I rejoined politely, "but now you'll forgive me. . . ."

"Surely you see," he went on, buttonholing me, "that it is a great moment; Paul and Jesus talking of Christianity; it must end by Paul striking Jesus down, killing him!—a great scene."

"Write it, my dear fellow!" I exclaimed; "but I must be getting on," for really I wasn't interested enough even to tell him that Jesus was crucified fifteen years or so before Saul was converted on the road to Damascus.

"You don't seem interested," he cried in astonishment. "It's surely a great scene?"

"Possibly," I replied, "but I confess that idea of yours leaves me cold."

"But I'll make Jesus live," he exclaimed, "I'll make him real. . . ."

It seemed to me that he did not know what he was talking about. He could no more recreate Jesus than swallow Mont Blanc, and when I

thought of his utter want of reading or knowledge; his lack of historic imagination, I could only smile. Anatole France has historic imagination and vast reading; but the task would be too big for him, as it was too big for his master, Renan. But Moore—

France always says he never reads his contemporaries because he must know all their ideas, being of the same time; but Moore knows only half a dozen modern Frenchmen. The East and its customs are as completely incomprehensible to him as a cuneiform inscription, and pagan as he is, a pagan taught by Gautier, he could no more realize Jesus than make pictures of the fourth dimension. I turned to leave him. It was useless talking.

"Please tell me before you go," he persisted, "where you got the idea that Jesus didn't die on the cross. That interests me enormously. . . ."

"Jesus is said to have died in a few hours," I said. "That astonished even Pilate and so I thought—"

"Oh," cried Moore, disappointed. "It's only a guess of yours; but why take him to Cesarea? Why bring Paul there? Why . . . ?"

I knew he was merely informing himself in his usual dexterous way, so tried to cut him short.

"An early tradition," I cried; "my dear fellow, an early tradition," and ever since Moore

has talked about this "early tradition," though it would puzzle him to say where it's to be found.

In due time Moore wrote his half-play, half-story, "The Apostle," and published it.

In "The Apostle," which is half scenario, half drama, and suffers from hurried writing, Moore makes Paul strike Jesus down and kill him.

He told me a year or two later that he could not understand the cold reception given to this playlet; he still thought his idea "wonderful—intensely dramatic"—and his fingers beat in the conviction.

All this made me curious about "The Brook Kerith": had Moore changed his point of view?—I wondered. Could he have become a convert to Christianity? Impossible.

Strange to say, however, the best book he has written is "The Confessions," and about the best pages in it are those inspired by the story of Jesus. Moore, copying his master, Gautier, professes to hate the Crucified One and gives his reasons; here are some of them:

"Pity, that most vile of all vile virtues, has never been known to me. . . .

"Hither the world has been drifting since the coming of the pale socialist of Galilee; and this is why I hate Him and deny His divinity. . . .

"Poor fallen God! I, who hold nought else

pitiful, pity Thee, Thy bleeding feet and hands, Thy hanging body; Thou at least art picturesque, and in a way beautiful in the midst of the somber mediocrity towards which Thou hast drifted for two thousand years, a flag; and in which Thou shalt find Thy doom as I mine; I, who will not adore Thee and cannot curse Thee now. For verily Thy life and Thy fate has (!) been greater, stranger and more Divine than any man's has been. The chosen people, the garden, the betrayal, the crucifixion, and the beautiful story, not of Mary, but of Magdalen. The God descending to the harlot! Even the great pagan world of marble and pomp and lust and cruelty, that my soul goes out to and hails as the grandest, has not so sublime a contrast to show us as this."

Moore goes on to praise injustice and declare that the torture of the weak adds to his pleasure in life. This extravagance may be a Sadic pose; but one could almost assert that the mere writing of it showed how unfit Moore was to attempt a Life of Christ.

A word or two here about the "Apostle" will be permitted me. It is a drama in three acts with a prefatory letter by the author "on reading the Bible for the first time."

In this letter Moore has done me the honor of travestyng my picture of Paul in "The Miracle of the Stigmata" by adding unknown and discordant details. My portrait of Paul's appear-

ance was taken from tradition. Paul was a short man, bald and bearded. Moore has altered it by giving him "dark curly hair" and adding "some belly under his girdle." In "The Brook Kerith" Moore is better advised; he makes Paul bald, but still sticks to the paunch. Those who think that Paul's dæmonic energy, passionate emotion and contempt for the lusts of the flesh find fitting symbol in obesity will admire Moore's daring. Moore goes on: "Sometimes Paul appears with his shirt open and there is a great shock of curled hair between his breasts and his reddish hand goes there and he scratches as he talks." After painting this picture Moore pauses "to wonder if Paul has ever been seen by any man as clearly as he has been by me." And later still he hopes that all faults will be pardoned him "for the sake of my portrait of Paul." But this portrait is the portrait of some dirty monk. Is Moore ignorant of the fact that the Jews made cleanliness a part of their ceremonial? They washed not only the hands but the feet before meals. In the Talmud they were taught that a stain on the dress of a teacher was disgraceful. Even Moore should know that Christian contempt of the body did not lead to uncleanness and dirty clothing till a century or so after the death of Christ. The cult for dirt of person and raiment sprang up in Alexandria in the second century.

Yet this so-called portrait of Paul is surpassed in childish caricature by the portrait of Jesus in "The Brook Kerith."

The Christ that walks through Moore's pages is a man of unclean physical habits. On page 122 we are told that Joseph did not recognize Jesus as he passed, "so unseemly were the ragged shirt and the cloak of camel's or goat's hair he wore over it, patched along and across, one long tatter hanging on a loose thread. It caught in his feet, and perforce he hitched it up as he walked" and Joseph remembered that he looked upon the passenger as "a mendicant wonder-worker on his round from village to village."

Mr. Moore has no warrant, Biblical or profane, for his presentation of Christ as a compound of ragged Hindoo fakir and verminous Thomas à Becket. In the Jewish religion, holiness and cleanliness were inexorably knit together, as witnessed by innumerable passages in the Talmud, Mishna and Zohar, and the traditions and life stories of saints. Among Jews, the teacher, whatever his shade of heterodoxy, is always a man of scrupulous cleanliness and ceremonious raiment.

But Moore has done worse than make the clean dirty. The chief characteristic trait of the East from Cabul to Carthage is the reverence shown to teachers and healers. As soon as a man begins to teach, gifts are showered on him

by those who have won spiritual encouragement from him, and that Jesus was followed with deepest reverence is certain. Men left their life-long occupation at his bidding; it was an honor to be numbered among his disciples. If Moore had ever read of his entrance into Jerusalem he would have had an inkling of the way he was treated. They took a young ass and put their clothes on it for him to sit on, and "a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Reverence for spiritual teachers is the one gift of the East to the West—the chiefest lesson which we have yet to learn.

And this reverence showed itself in all sorts of gifts. The costliest ointment was poured on the feet of Jesus and even the soldiers after his crucifixion "cast lots for his garment," for it was woven in one piece, we are told, and could not be divided. Evidently it was woven especially for the Master and by loving hands.

Moore's so-called portraits are nothing but degraded and vulgar caricatures, based on a knowledge of monkery, and have no relation to Paul or Jesus whether in outward appearance

or in spiritual attribute. He makes Paul drive like a schoolboy; but Paul's words are historical. His speech on Mars Hill in Athens just above the Agora or market place, to a great crowd grouped below him, is a masterpiece of eloquence.

And the words Moore puts in Jesus' mouth are still more unworthy of Him who spoke as never man spake. Our hearts do not burn within us as we read Moore's "Jesus," save with indignation against the writer who could so defile the most sacred of our spiritual possessions; Moore degrades Jesus deliberately, brings him to his own level by putting into his mouth such phrases as "we have fed (*sic*)" in the "Apostle."

Peter does not fare better at his hands than Paul. He calls Peter "a parcel of ancient rudiments," whatever that may mean.

Moore is as ignorant of Rome and Roman customs as he is of life in the East. On page 107 he makes Pilate run his hand through his beard. He would say it was a realistic touch that makes Pilate live to him. But Roman aristocrats were usually clean shaven, and a Roman official among people who wore beards as the Jews did, would certainly be clean shaven as a caste-mark and distinction.

Every page in this book is a slap in the face to the student.

One Mathias is represented as being a great

philosopher, a thinker who meditates on the nature of God—a seeker after wisdom; yet he tells us with ironical laughter “that the neighborhood was full of prophets, as ignorant and as ugly as hyenas. They live, he said, in the caves along the western coasts of the Salt Lake, growling and snarling over the world, which they seem to think rotten and ready for them to devour.”

This is not the comment of a Jew thinker and seeker after wisdom, but of some lewd commercial traveler talking in a cafe of the Place Pigalle.

In the same spirit Mr. Moore makes the president of the Essenes talk in a mixture of Sussex and Devon dialect with Moore’s own contempt for grammar—“I shall be *rare* glad.”

Throughout the Orient among the Afghans and the Arabs as among the Jews there is a ceremonious submission of son to father; outward observances of humility in speech and bearing are regarded as essential to family life. Moore makes Joseph poke fun at his father, and the father replies—“At it, Joseph, as beforetimes, rallying thy old father”—which would be an offense, almost a crime in Jewish eyes. But Moore’s ignorance is like the darkness of the Egyptian plague; it can be felt.

His pet word in this book is “beforetimes,” which should not be used as he uses it. He also

uses "whither" for "where." "An assembly hall *whither* the curators met. . . . I have come *thither* hoping to find the truth here. And from *thence* he proceeded." "From *whence*," too, and a dozen other blunders of the same class down to the amusing:—"he might have refused to serve any but she."

But in spite of all such blunders and faults the book might still be an enthralling story; might even be a great and wonderful story, but the marvel is that there is nothing in it of any value or interest. No page that rises above the commonplace; no sentence or phrase in the whole two hundred thousand words that I can remember with pleasure or care to quote.

I do not wish to deal with Moore in a small or carping spirit: I have never spoken in favor of learning in my life: memory is but an intellectual wallet and is no guide whatever to the capacity of the mind. One can go further: every thinker knows how reading dwarfs thought, leading you rather to acquire the ideas of others than develop the native quality of your own intelligence; but a faculty of study is needful in these days and a fair amount of knowledge imperative. Especially in cases where the historic imagination is required, absolute ignorance would handicap even genius out of the race.

Moore, however, must be heard in his own defense. Shortly after publishing the first part

of this sketch in which I undertook to expose some of Moore's ignorances, I received a letter from him telling me that for my own sake I had better not make the attempt. And he proceeds with a whole-hearted belief in his own learning which it would be a compliment to call idolatrous:

"I know that there is nothing in 'The Brook Kerith' that you could attack with success. You seemed to think in the article you published that I was not acquainted with the subject, but I knew myself to be quite as well informed as Renan and that there was no point at which you could strike with effect. Neither private nor public criticism has revealed any 'mistake.' In your article you spoke of the Gospel of John as if you regarded it of some value as an historical document, whereas it is as I am sure you have learnt since, a merely ecclesiastical work, I might almost say a romance, and was certainly written many years later than the synoptic Gospels, probably about a hundred years later. For my sake, I mean for the sake of the publisher, I am sorry the advertised attack was not delivered; a well-directed attack would have helped the sale. It surprised me, however, that you did not appreciate the tide of the narrative flowing slowly, but flowing always and diversified with many anecdotes that heighten the interest of the reader. I cannot but think that I have added

a prose epic to the volume of English literature. I don't much care whether I have or not, but that is just my feeling."

That Moore should compare his learning with Renan's makes me grin: the coupling of the two names is something the French would call "saugrenu," or ridiculously absurd. And worse than any difference of knowledge is a difference in mental stature of the two men. Renan knew a great man when he met him; Moore does not.

Moore will not study and cannot read authorities; yet he is industrious in his own way. His method of writing is laborious in the extreme. Before beginning a book he makes a scenario, divided into chapters; then he writes the book hastily chapter by chapter putting in all his chief ideas; finally he goes over the whole book re-writing it as carefully and as well as he can. He corrects the printed proofs meticulously and years after a book has been published he will take it up again and re-write it page by page. He is an artist in the desire to give perfect form to his conception. This is his religion and he has served it with hieratic devotion. What I feel compelled to emphasize is that his power as a student is below the ordinary. His ignorances are abyssmal. He does not even now know the tendency of the most recent criticism is to give weight to John's Gospel in spite of its being a tract for the times, and it is seldom

dated now more than fifty years after the Synoptics. In my opinion it is of great value. But if Moore were asked offhand to translate synoptic he would be caught napping; yet he assumes an air of authoritative knowledge hardly to be justified in a great scholar. Shaw on the other hand, pretends to no special knowledge of the subject; yet on this question of the value of John's gospel, he has found reasons of his own for agreeing with the latest scholarship.

What I want to make plain is that George Moore's ignorance makes his painting grotesque and his real qualities as a writer are all obscured and rendered worthless by this uncongenial task. Moore's grip on ordinary life makes all his books more or less interesting. There are pages even in the worst that one can read with some pleasure, but in "The Brook Kerith" there are no such springs of sweet water. The book is dull and stupid. And I am relieved to know that Bernard Shaw agrees with me in this judgment. I've just received a letter from him in which he says:

"I read about thirty pages of 'The Brook Kerith.' It then began to dawn on me that there was no mortal reason why Moore should not keep going on exactly like that for fifty thousand pages, or fifty million for that matter, if he lived long enough to sling the ink. This so oppressed

me that I put the book aside intending, as I still intend, to finish it at greater leisure."

It is useless to try to disguise it. I am at the opposite pole to Moore. I, too, read Gautier in Paris and pages of his "Mlle. de Maupin" still stick in my memory; like Moore I could boast that "the stream which poured from the side of the Crucified One and made a red girdle round the world, never bathed me in its flood." I, too, "love gold and marble and purple and bands of nude youths and maidens swaying on horses without bridle or saddle against a background of deep blue as on the frieze of the Parthenon."

But afterwards I learned something of what the theory of evolution implies; realized that all great men are moments in the life of mankind, and that the lesson of every great life in the past must be learned before we can hope to push further into the Unknown than our predecessors. Gradually I came to understand that Jerusalem and not Athens is the sacred city and that one has to love Jesus and his gospel of love and pity or one will never come to full stature. Born rebels even have to realize that Love is the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one cometh unto wisdom but by Love. The more I studied Jesus the greater he became to me till little by little he changed my outlook on life. I have been convinced now for years that the modern world in turning its back on Jesus and ignoring his

teachings has gone hopelessly astray. It has listened to false prophets and followed blind guides and has fallen into the ditch. It must retrace its steps. It must learn the lessons of love and pity, of gentle thought for others and the soft words that turn aside wrath; it must subdue pride and cultivate loving kindness. There must be a spiritual rebirth; we must submit ourselves again like little children to sit at the feet of the Master: all the best lessons are learned by Faith.

And in the light of this belief how magical the world becomes; it is no longer a machine shop or a restaurant but a House Beautiful, the home and habitation of a God.

Those deep-souled Jews were verily and indeed the chosen people. How poor all our philosophies and sterile all our teaching in comparison with their wisdom and their insight; how contemptible and small our achievements when a Jew boy two thousand years ago by taking counsel with his own heart has made himself the master of our destinies. "There is no other way under Heaven by which men can be saved. . . . Verily I say unto you not one jot or one tittle of my word shall ever pass away."

What sublime assurance! And yet it looks the plain truth to us now. Shaw declares that Jesus' teaching on socialism must be followed

to-day. Shaw even admits that Jesus is the wisest of social reformers.

There is new hope for us all in the legend of Jesus and in his world-shaking success; hope and perhaps even some foundation for faith. That a man should live in an obscure corner of Judaea nineteen centuries ago, speak only an insignificant dialect, and yet by dint of wisdom and goodness and in spite of having suffered a shameful death, reign as a God for these two thousand years and be adored by hundreds of millions of the conquering races, goes far to prove that goodness and wisdom are fed by some secret source and well up from the deep to recreate the children of men.

And our modern theory is not out of harmony with much of this belief. It appears to us that God is finding Himself through us and our growth, and especially through our creations of Truth and Beauty and Goodness—flowers on the Tree of Life, a joy from everlasting to everlasting. We too can believe as Jesus believed, that virtue perpetuates itself, increasing from age to age, while the evil is diminishing, dying, and is only relative so to speak, or growth arrested. And our high task it is to help this shaping Spirit to self-realization and fulfilment in our own souls, knowing all the while that the roses of life grow best about the Cross.

What a miraculous, divine world. And what solace there is in it for the soul, now for many years weary and heavy laden. I used to say that for two centuries men have been trying to live without souls and they have found the way long and toilsome. Now the soul will come once more to honor and all the sweet affections of the spirit, charity first, and forgiveness and loving kindness. Our prisons will all be turned into hospitals and——



Lord Dunsany

LORD DUNSANY AND SIDNEY SIME



IT IS now many a year since I wrote that we were living through a rebirth of religion and a renascence of art, the most wonderful period in recorded time.

The progress of humanity is like skating on the outside edge: as soon as the rhythmic curve of movement takes the skater away from the line of progress forward, the swing to the other side is already outlined. The force of individualism and its self-asserting separating tendencies have gone too far, and everywhere men are drawing closer together in nations and world-empires. As individualism may be said to have begun with Luther and to have ended in the doubting of Voltaire, so belief was born again into the world with Goethe and is certain in time to develop a scientific morality and to bring hope back into the lives of men and inspire new motives of action.

Symptoms of this rebirth of religion showed themselves sporadically in Britain twenty years ago, just as the renascence of art came to flower first in France. Chesterton entered the world

of London with a pagan love of life and feasting, but avowed himself from the beginning a Christian with a strong tinge of mysticism. His play "Magic," had more than a success of esteem in London; thoughtful people hailed it as a symptom of the dawning light.

It was a comparative failure in New York, for New York is too busy to think, and much too busy to play curiously with new thought. New York has made up its mind that Christianity is played out; New York is too wise to believe in miracles; when chairs move on the stage of their own accord and lights go out and come in again at their own sweet will, New York yawns, all unwitting of the fact that everything we do or think is a miracle inexplicable, unspeakably mysterious as the rhythmic movements of the stars and the strange currents sweeping suns and planets and this solid earth itself to some unimaginable bourne. But London took "Magic," and Chesterton to its heart of hearts.

In the same abrupt way one heard of Dunsany and now and again, of Sidney Sime who continues to illustrate his works with a wealth of weird imagining.

Dunsany's play, "The Gods of the Mountain," was produced in the Haymarket Theatre when Herbert Trench, the poet, was manager and Lord Howard de Walden, also a poet, but enormously rich, was the financier.

It took London by storm, which simply shows what a wonderful capital London is, for the play has dreadful faults, as we shall see later.

And then Dunsany tales and Dunsany plays were on every table and here and there an artist spoke of Sime as one of the master painters of the time. I knew Sime long before I saw Dunsany; in fact, I first heard of Dunsany's genius from Sime.

The first time I saw Dunsany was the first night of "The Gods of the Mountain" in the early summer of 1911: a sympathetic appearance; very tall, over six feet; very slight with a boyish face, rather like Dowson's, but with power in the strong chin and long jaw. The nose, too, slightly beaked—a suggestion of the Roman or aristocratic type, but combined with the sensitive lips and thoughtful eyes of the poet; the manner and voice, too, were reassuring. He was more courteous, amiable, than an Englishman ever is, with a boyish frankness and joy in praise and superb Celtic blue eyes that were reflective and roguish, piercing or caressing—all in a minute—speed here and strength and joy in living.

But now what has he done?

"The Gods of the Mountains" is much his finest work as yet and a study of it shows his strength and weakness to perfection. The first performance made an extraordinary impression

on me and I wrote of it the same week, in the London "Academy," as "one of the nights of my life."

A few years later Chesterton's "Magic" had an even greater effect on me; because it was a consistent whole and worked up crescendo to a climax whereas "The Gods of the Mountain" fizzled out in the last act into the weakest melodrama.

The entrance of the Gods as green men in armor or stone as tragic Fates was simply ludicrous.

How then should the play have finished?

I ventured to suggest another ending at the time and I shall lay it before my readers now with confidence for in the meantime some of those whose judgment in such matters counts, have approved it.

Think of the position. Here are seven beggars who by the sheer genius of one of their number, Agmar, have caused themselves to be received by the citizens of a great town as their gods. Their authority is still insecure. There are doubters in the city; sceptics even; but the vast majority treat the beggars as gods and give them whatever they desire.

Suddenly, I think, one of the beggar-gods should die? How explain that to the citizens? True gods don't die. Agmar must turn the difficulty into an advantage. He should announce

the fact to the citizens and warn them solemnly to get rid of the doubters and sceptics. "It is the disbelief of man," he must say, "that kills the gods."

The citizens immediately seize the chief infidels and execute them: "How can we hope for benefit from our gods when you insult them with your doubts?"

And so the beggar-gods have a reprieve and live happily for a time.

But at length Fate plays them the worst trick.

One morning their leader, Agmar, is found dead and they come together, livid with fear, for how shall they explain that their chief is mortal?

Some counsel flight: Ulf chants his old song of fear and boding when suddenly Slag, who was Agmar's servant and admirer, is inspired by a ray of his master's genius.

"There is no need for fear," he cries. "Any lie will fool mankind now. Had Agmar died in the beginning we should indeed have been lost; but now faith in us and our wonder-working powers is established; churches have been built to us; priests sing our praises; acolytes burn incense before our effigies; all these will fight for us as for their living. Besides, young and old alike believe in us and love us. There is no danger I tell you. We have simply to say that Agmar has returned to Olympos to make the

After-Life better for the men and women of Kongros and they will all believe us. And so in turn as we die each of us will merely go back to the Heavenly City to prepare a place for the children of men."

No better counsel offering, Slag announces Agmar's death in this way, and the people all bow themselves before him in reverence and thanksgiving. "Great is Agmar and good, and we thank our gods and bring them rich gifts."

This seems to me the natural, inevitable, ironical end.

In "The Gods of the Mountain" Dunsany had an inspiration; but he did not take thought or was lacking in patience and so a fine conception was only half realized.

Two other of Dunsany's plays merit brief mention. "A night at an Inn" is an excellent melodrama in one act with a real thrill in it worthy of the Grand Guignol in Paris; and "The Tents of the Arabs," is something more. The story is very simple, but memorable in Dunsany's work, for it is a love story. The king has left his throne and wearisome state and gone to the desert and found a gypsy love:

KING. Now I have known the desert and dwelt in the tents of the Arabs.

EZNARA. There is no land like the desert and like the Arabs no people.

KING. It is all over and done. I return to the walls of my fathers.

EZNARA. Time cannot put it away; I go back to the desert that nursed me.

The Grand Chamberlain comes to the gate expecting the king to arrive. A camel-driver who loves the city and hates the desert claims that he is the king; but the Chamberlain doubts him till the real king, drawn by his love, declares that he has seen and known the camel-driver in Mecca and he is really the king.

The Chamberlain is convinced. The camel-driver goes in to wear the crown while the real king returns to his love and the desert.

It is a pretty story charmingly told. The few sentences I have quoted give us the secret of Dunsany's verbal magic. First of all, they are not prose at all, but verse: the hexameters are clearly defined.

But is it wise thus to mix poetry with prose? Goethe does it often, as Ruskin, and Carlyle, Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor all did; but in France, as in Athens, where the prose tradition is at its best, the practice is condemned. Still, there it is. Dunsany is a poet and dreamer, and if it is ever permitted to use poetry in guise of prose surely it should be permitted in a love story, for love is nothing if not lyrical.

It is just as clear that the mysterious emotional appeal of Dunsany's prose is derived from the Bible. Each of these verses has the Hebrew

repetition in it; everyone remembers the much-quoted example: "Tell it not in Gath: talk not of it in the streets of Ascalon."

I used to wonder whether Dunsany had copied the biblical manner and vocabulary wittingly or unwittingly, and so I wrote to him asking him to tell me. Here is his answer:

Dunsany Castle, Co. Meath,
Nov. 3, '12.

. . . Please excuse dictation so I can ramble reminiscently.

I think I owe most of my style to the reports of proceedings in the divorce court; were it not for these my mother might have allowed me to read newspapers before I went to school; as it was she never did. I began reading Grimm and then Andersen. I remember reading them in the evening with twilight coming on. All the windows of the rooms I used in the house in Kent where I was brought up faced the sunset. There are no facts about a sunset; none are chronicled in Blue-books. There are no advertisements of them.

When I went to Cheam school I was given a lot of the Bible to read. This turned my thoughts eastward. For years no style seemed to me natural but that of the Bible and I feared that I never would become a writer when I saw that other people did not use it.

When I learned Greek at Cheam and heard

of other gods a great pity came on me for those beautiful marble people that had become forsaken and this mood has never quite left me.

When I went to Eton the housemaid forgot to call me, or only half called me rather, on the morning of the Greek exam. I therefore took a lower place than I should have and less than three years later, when I left to go to a crammer's where my education ceased, my knowledge of the classics was most incomplete. But incomplete in a strange way, for they had implanted in me at Cheam and Eton a love of the classical world of which I knew almost nothing.

And then one day imagination came to the rescue and I made unto myself gods; and having made gods I had to make people to worship them and cities for them to live in and kings to rule over them; and then there had to be names for the kings and the cities and great plausible names for the huge rivers that I saw sweeping down through kingdoms by night.

I suppose that the back parts of my head are full of more Greek words than I ever knew the meaning of and names of Old Testament kings. Many an ode of Horace I learnt before I knew the meaning of a line of it. I suppose that when one wants to invent a name, Memory, "The Mother of the Muses," sitting in those lumber houses of the mind that one wrongly calls "forgotten," knits together strange old syllables into

as many names as one needs. At least I have sometimes traced resemblance to names known long since in some word that I have coined at the time in pure inspiration.

Nothing comes easier to me than inventing names (except, perhaps, myths). Here are some of my favorites: Sardalthion, Thaddenblarna, the citadel of the gods, and Perdondaris, that famous city.

An effect that the classics have had on me is this. Some one will say or I read somewhere—"as so-and-so said before the walls of such-and-such," and it will convey to me with my incomplete knowledge of the classics nothing but wonder, and something of this wonder I give back to my readers when I refer casually in passing to some battle or story well known in kingdoms on the far side of the sunset and cities built of twilight where only I have been. . . .

But enough.

Yours sincerely, DUNSANY.

The stories and tales of Dunsany fall into a lower class than his plays; though studded here and there with very beautiful passages they are usually, almost meaningless. The truth is the lack of thought in Dunsany becomes painful to me on a prolonged reading; his originality is of imagination or rather of Celtic fancy and rarely of insight. If we go to his belief we shall hardly

find an original word in it, much less an original idea.

He contributed an article to the "National Review" in 1911 which was a sort of rehash of Ruskin with here and there an aphorism of Emerson. For instance, he condemned advertisements in Ruskin's own petulant way: "to romance they seem the battlements of the fortress of Avarice," and "Romance," he went on, "is the most real thing in life." He quarrels with "the gift of matter enthroned and endowed by man with life: I mean iron vitalized by steam and rushing from city to city, and owning men as slaves"; which is simply a poor paraphrase of Emerson's:

"Things are in the saddle
And ride mankind."

Dunsany has got a huge popularity because he represents in some degree the new revolt; but his reputation is based on too slight a foundation to endure; he must do better work than he has yet done if he wishes to be of the Sacred Band and stand on the forehead of the time to come. He has been terribly handicapped by his name and position; true, he had the good luck to be brought up on the Bible and the fairy tales of Andersen and Grimm; but then he went to Eton and he is still suffering from that infection. Eton made him an athlete, it is said, and taught him to play cricket; but it also taught him to

sneer at woman's suffrage and to revere the House of Lords.

At Eton he lost a little of his Celtic kindly humane manners and learned "good form"; instead of prizing Celtic equality and the Kingdom of man upon earth, he came to believe in British imperialism and the world-devouring destinies of the British Empire.

As every one knows, Dunsany is an Irish peer and yet he not only went into the English army and fought the Germans; but before that he had fought against the Boer farmers and quite lately he fought in Dublin against his own poor countrymen and was there grievously wounded, which should have taught him sense. All this imperialistic foolery I put down to his Eton training and, of course, in the last resort to his want of brains, just as I attribute Chesterton's wild abuse of the Hun to want of education. These are blunders that a large mind, a mind, as Meredith used to say, "that had travelled," could not possibly make.

MR. SYDNEY SIME

Sidney Sime, who illustrates Dunsany's books and plays with such singular ability, is a far abler man than the Irish lord. I should like to reproduce here one of his imaginative illustrations, for I regard most of them as extraordinary. Sime is a strongly-built man of about five feet seven or eight with a cliff-like, overhanging,

tyrannous forehead. His eyes are superlative, grayish blue looking out under heavy brows, eyes with a pathetic patience in them as of one who has lived with sorrow; and realizes—

“The weary weight of all this unintelligible world.” From time to time humorous gleams light up the eyes and the whole face; mirth on melancholy—a modern combination.

Sime has had a sensational career. He was a collier's boy and worked more than ten years underground; yet he is one of the best read men I know and I am inclined to think him one of the greatest of living artists. There are some paintings of his which I would as soon possess as the best of Cezanne and in sheer imaginative quality his best is without an equal in modern work.

There is no lack of thought in Sime. His imagination and his mentality are in perfect equipoise; nearly all his paintings have that curious economy of detail coupled with grandeur of design, which is the hall-mark of the great masters.

And withal the man is simplicity itself; he meets lord and ploughman in the same human way; he has had a dreadfully hard struggle and yet he is as sunny-tempered and optimistic as a boy. He is for the workman without ostentation; yet the moment he begins to speak you realize that he sees the master's side, too—a singular and powerful personality.

I feel that I have only given sketches of these two distinguished artists. I ought to be able to make Sime's portrait at least fuller at once and more vivid, for I am in most intimate sympathy with him. I remember we had a long talk once about Blake's prophetic writings and to my wonder Sime took the position I had always maintained, that Blake is not to be explained any more than a picture; you must be content to commune with him, live with his works, and in time you may absorb his influence which is the most precious thing he has to give.

I got a letter from Sime on this point once which I think explains my admiration for his insight and establishes my claims for him as an original thinker and a master of English prose.

Let my readers remember it is the letter of a great painter, a colorist as original as Watteau.

WORPLESDON.N

My Dear Harris:

I hope I did not convey any idea that Blake is communicable. The interest of him to me lies in the fact that he isn't. It is one of my delusions that there is not any general truth or value outside the perceptive soul; no intrinsic values.

Blake speaks like the wind in the chimney, which sings with all the voices of all dead poets and always sings the heart's desire without the bondage of words. The commentators will try in vain to pigeonhole Blake as they have failed

with others, but they will throw their obfuscating mildew around his dim and unfinished statement without shame.

Blake told his friend Butts that he was bringing a poem to town and what he meant by a poem was a work that intrigued and allured and satisfied the imagination but utterly confounded and bewildered the corporeal sense.

We go to embark at Naples and thence our course lies eastwards and as I am neither captain nor owner, it is unlikely that I may make the ship swim where I may please; but your offer of hospitality and entertainment at Nice is none the less most grateful.

People who delight in doing kindnesses make the world a pleasant place. I have known you only a little time, but that time is crowded with real human friendliness; if I do receive any appointment in Hell, as I may hope to, I will do my utmost to save a cool corner for you.

Yours sincerely, SIDNEY H. SIME.

I want to make my readers feel as I feel, that Sime is a big man—an intellectual force—and so I look at him in terms of the time. I should as soon expect Shaw to talk truculent nonsense about the Germans as Sime. Though I imagine Sime does not know a word of German, his native brains would long ago have taught him the true meaning of the great fight the Germans have put up against what appeared to most men

overwhelming odds. Sime would feel at once that such courage and such efficiency must be based on *virtue* and not on any "preparedness," which would hardly last through one year of warfare. Sime is one of those rare men who do not let themselves be cheated by words—a pity there are not more of them in every nation. We should then stand a better chance of peace—peace without victory—which, if we only knew it, is the ideal.

One story must still be told to Lord Dunsany's credit before I part with him.

In a South coast bathing resort the cry went up one morning that a man was drowning.

A big policeman had ventured into the breakers after a southwest gale and was sinking. Dunsany happened to be strolling on the beach. He pulled off his coat and boots and rushed into the surf. In five minutes he brought the policeman safe to shore. The crowd gathered round him cheering; everybody wanted to know his name, but he tore himself away, refusing to name himself, and trotted off to change his wet clothes. Some one recognized him and told the story.

This must be put down on the credit-side as the virtue of his imperialism.

The story delights me! What great spirits we have known and noble when such men as these do not stand out like steeples. For take him as you please; berate his shortcomings as

you will, Dunsany is another Sidney, Sidney with soul all aflame for love of honor and high deeds to their own music chanted, and Sime the collier lad might stand level-browed before Rembrandt himself, being of the same royal lineage. And there they pass in London streets and go up and down, unknown and unappreciated. When they are dead and gone, men will probably crown them and do them tardy reverence and wonder about them and form legends of their sayings and doings, and thus they, too, shall have their part in making the land that bore them, memorable and of high repute. They both know the truth of the poet's supreme solace:

“Others, I doubt not, if not we,
The issue of our toils shall see;
Young children gather as their own
The harvest that the dead have sown,
The dead forgotten and unknown.”

JAMES THOMSON: AN UNKNOWN IMMORTAL



HERE is an old story that tells how a man went about without a shadow and what a sensation the loss caused when it was discovered. For the greater part of the nineteenth century the majority of men went about without souls in drear discomfort, yet they only realized their loss when it was pointed out to them by poets and idealists. Every one had got drunk with greed and was mad to get rich; the things of the spirit were thrust aside; the soul ignored.

Karl Marx proved in "Das Kapital" that working men, women and children were never so exploited as towards the middle of the nineteenth century in the factories of England; mere wage slaves they were, worse treated than they would have been had the employers owned them body and soul; for then at least they would have been fed and housed decently.

The poets were naturally the first to revolt against the sordid life of capitalistic exploitation. Hood's "Song of the Shirt" and "One More Unfortunate" were the lyrics of that sad time when men "wore the name of freedom graven on a heavier chain."



James Thomson

The greatest poets were in all countries the most convinced pessimists; Leopardi in Italy, Heine in Germany and Thomson in England. Their souls had been maimed and wounded in the squalid struggle.

Thomson interested me very early by what seemed pure chance. In 1874 or thereabouts Charles Bradlaugh spoke in Lawrence, Kan., and though not so good a speaker as Ingersoll made an even deeper impression on me by dint of force of character and personality. I began reading "The National Reformer" and soon noticed "jottings" by "B. V.," which excited my curiosity and admiration. One day I came across the first verses of "The City of Dreadful Night"; the title appealed to me and the poem made a tremendous impression on me: I was young and had not found my work in life.

The weary weight of this unintelligible world lay heavy on me and the builded desolation and passionate despair of Thomson's poem took complete possession of my spirit. Verse after verse once read, printed itself in my brain unforgettably; ever since they come back to me in dark hours, and I find myself using them as a bitter tonic. Take such a verse as this:

"The sense that every struggle brings defeat

Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;
That all the oracles are dumb or cheat

Because they have no secret to express;

That none can pierce the vast black veil
uncertain

Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
That all is vanity and nothingness."

Such words sink deep into the heart as meteors
into the earth dropped from some higher sphere.
Or this:

"We do not ask a longer term of strife,
Weakness and weariness and nameless woes;
We do not claim renewed and endless life
When this which is our torment here shall
close,

An everlasting conscious inanition!
We yearn for speedy death in full fruition,
Dateless oblivion and divine repose."

That "dateless oblivion and divine repose"
sings itself in my memory still with an imperish-
able cadence. Almost every verse of this long
poem has the same high finish; it would puzzle
one to find a weak stanza. Every mood of sad-
ness has its perfect expression.

"We finish thus; and all our wretched race
Shall finish with its cycle, and give place
To other beings, with their own time-doom;
Infinite aeons ere our kind began;
Infinite aeons after the last man
Has joined the mammoth in earth's tomb and
womb."

That "tomb" and "womb" has always repre-
sented to me the clods falling on the coffin!

And here is the intellectual recognition of the appalling truth:

"I find no hint throughout the Universe
Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;

I find alone Necessity Supreme;
With infinite Mystery, abysmal, dark,
Unlighted ever by the faintest spark
For us the flitting shadows of a dream."

After living in that terrible "City" for weeks I dug up a good many of Thomson's translations and critical essays and found everywhere the same masculine grasp of truth and deep comprehension of all high gifts and qualities. A critic's value is not to be gauged by his agreement with the established estimates of great men, but by the degree in which he can enlarge and enrich these secular judgments of humanity. And if he cannot rise to this height he should be esteemed for the alacrity with which he discovers and proclaims men of genius neglected in his own time.

I still remember the surprise I felt when Thomson wrote his essay on "The Poems of William Blake," and allayed my fears by beginning with praise of the "magnificent prose as well as poetry" in the book.

I don't set much store on his high and just praise of Blake, for already Dante Rossetti, at least, if not Swinburne, had been before him in appreciation, but when he wrote on the "Improvisations from the Spirit," by Garth Wilkinson,

Thomson had no forerunners, to my knowledge, yet his understanding is just as complete and his eulogy as finely balanced. He wrote about Wilkinson's work as "A Strange Book"; he does not for a moment accept his mysticism and again and again points out that these "improvisations" might be bettered by a little painstaking and self-criticism. On the whole, his praise is more than generous, though finely qualified.

My high esteem of Thomson grew with the years so that when I found myself in London in 1881 for a holiday he was one of the first men I wanted to meet. I had no position at the time but felt that a man who had given his best work to "The National Reformer" would, perhaps, be willing to meet even an unknown admirer. A clergyman friend of mine knew Phillip Bourke Marston, the blind poet, and told me that he had heard Marston mention Thomson. One morning I was delighted to get a letter from my friend saying that if I would come to his rooms about four that afternoon I should meet both Marston and Thomson, for Marston had promised to bring the great man.

Of course I was on hand, and after I had talked to the Rev. John Verschoyle for perhaps ten minutes and thanked him warmly, the two poets came in. I knew Marston slightly, but even while shaking hands with him I was studying Thomson. To say I was disappointed gives

no idea of my dejection. I had seen a photograph that represented him as a man of about thirty of handsome, almost noble countenance; courage, vivacity, kindness shone from the well-cut features, capacious forehead and fine eyes. I had got the idea, too, that he was of good height; but he was short, hardly medium height, shrunk-en together, prematurely aged; the face was shrivelled, small, the skin lined and wrinkled, the expression querulous; his clothes were shabby and illfitting; taken all in all he looked an old wastrel.

The contrast between this man and his magnificent work was appalling; I could only stare at him and wonder for the explanation.

Verschoyle had begun to talk of poetry with Marston and now and again Thomson joined in almost as if against his will, I thought; when suddenly he interrupted the talk irrelevantly with a sort of plaint—"There's no drink?"

"Oh, I beg pardon," cried Verschoyle; and at once hastened to put whiskey and soda water on the table.

Verschoyle liked Marston and had the prejudices of a devout Christian and gentleman, and Thomson was a free-thinking Radical, so he left Thomson to me naturally.

Naturally, too, I filled Thomson's glass as soon as he emptied it and refilled it every little while the stimulant evidently doing him good.

Sober people are apt to think that men drink because they like the taste. I believe the idealists almost always drink for the effect; it throws off the depression under which they are apt to suffer and brings them up to their best and fullest life; encourages and enables them to show themselves at their best. Drink is said to induce suicide; it often postpones it.

Thomson soon joined in the conversation; the tension about my heart began to relax when I found that he talked admirably. Like all really able men he was astonishingly well-read; knew German thoroughly and Italian and French as well, was familiar with Heine, Leopardi and Carducci, names almost unknown in England at that time.

As the spirit took effect Thomson talked better than I had ever heard any one talk up to that time; the shrunken features seemed to fill out, the voice rounded to music with shrill discords of bitter sadness; the eyes now grey pools of soft light; now dark blue, deep beyond deep, held one enchanted with their play of expression; the face took on a certain nobility of power: Thomson had come into his kingdom and we were his thralls. That was the first time I had ever heard a great poet talk of poetry and I never forgot the lesson. Whenever he spoke of a poet he would quote a line or verse and these were often new

and always intensely characteristic; a verse of Shelley about music and violets; a line of Keats:

"There is a budding morrow in midnight."

Dante and Heine were enskied and sacred; Heine suffering in Paris on his mattress grave, like a tortured dog; was "a joyous heathen of richest blood, a Greek, a lusty lover of this world and life, an apostle of the rehabilitation of the 'flesh.'" And Dante eagle-eyed suddenly took a place apart of an incommunicable austere dignity.

Thomson modified nearly all the accepted judgments. I was at once delighted and disappointed to find that several of my little discoveries were accepted by him as commonplaces. The golden nuggets I had found and hoarded were only small change to him. For instance in spite of Matthew Arnold I could not accept Byron as a poet at all, and I held that Browning had produced twenty times as much high poetry as Tennyson and far more even than Wordsworth. Thomson flashed agreement with all this, but when I went on to say that Keats was a far greater poet than Shelley he dissented vehemently and when I asserted that Blake's mystical books were clear enough to any good reader and that he was among the greatest of the sons of men, Thomson shook his head. On this narrow line of dissent I found refuge for my soul and was content.

Nothing in Thomson's talk surprised me so much as the rich gaiety and joy in living he discovered when praising his favorite Heine; his own melancholy was evidently the souring, so to speak of a generous vintage; "the first of modern Pagans," he called Heine exultantly: "The greatest Jew since Jesus, and a divine poet to boot." "Then you don't think Jesus a poet?" I exclaimed.

"I mean by poet a singer," he retorted, and so I began to understand how this lover of music came to rate Shelley so highly for Shelley certainly was one of the greatest of singers.

Gradually the stimulant died out of Thomson: bit by bit the light left his eyes, the furrows and wrinkles came back, the old querulous dejected expression of his face returned. Marston got up to go and I did not try to make another appointment. My time in London was measured, and feeling that Thomson had come to grief when his gifts and powers ought to have gained him a great position, depressed me dreadfully. I had no idea then of the power of British snobbery and British conventions.

Alone together, Verschoyle and I looked at each other.

"Why has he lost hold on himself?" I asked.

"Atheists of that class," said Verschoyle, "generally come to ruin; they've no backbone in them."

"I remember hearing a story of Thomson," he went on. "Perhaps I ought to have told you. The father, Dr. Westland Marston, the literary and dramatic critic, you know?" I shook my head). "Well, he's blind, too, and he told it to me. I think he dislikes his son going about with Thomson. One day, it seems, Phillip Bourke Marston went to call on Thomson and found him wild, incipient Delirium Tremens. After a little while Thomson got quieter and began to follow Marston about tickling the back of his neck with a carving knife. When Phillip asked him what he was doing Thomson told him, but went on with the gruesome game. Scared stiff, the blind man tried to escape, but couldn't and was finally rescued by the chance arrival of Rossetti. A ghastly scene, eh?"

"Ghastly, indeed," I replied; "a touch of the grotesque in the horrible."

Was it the story or the personal impression? I can't say: somehow I felt that Thomson was lost. Was British prejudice to blame or was there any personal reason?

The thought crossed my mind that like de Musset, Thomson looked on drink as the open door to death and preferred it to any other. In that case why shouldn't he take it? I said to myself. There was a fierce youthful intolerance in me at the time; a great poet, it seemed to me, should make his life great: I had no notion then

that the burden is often too heavy for mortal strength and that sooner or later all the sons of Adam, or, at least, the most gifted, are sure to reach the breaking point.

But Thomson knew it and had said it in his own way in a hundred magical verses.

Thomson was, perhaps, the first to tell us that the passion of the creative artist, the wish to do our work, to mould the gold in us into perfect form, is one of the chief incentives to living:

“So potent is the Word, the Lord of Life,
And so tenacious Art,

Whose instinct urges to perpetual strife
With Death, Life’s counterpart;

The magic of their music, might and light,
Can keep one living in his own despite.”

A year or so later I was staying at Argenteuil, near Paris, when I read of Thomson’s death, and the curt posthumous notices showed that he had practically drunk himself to death. It was at Phillip Marston’s rooms in the Euston Road that the final catastrophe took place. He had drifted in on Marston in the afternoon; had talked of poetry and had had some whiskey. Internal hemorrhage followed; he was taken to University College Hospital nearby. Next day Marston and Sharp visited him; he begged a shilling for stamps to write some letters, he was literally without a penny, and died the following day.

Had he done his work; given all he had to give? I don't think so. In spite of his strength of will, and it was extraordinary, the tragic mishaps and injustices of life were too powerful and had overborne the Titan.

I could give a hundred specimens of his prose even which would convince any thinking mind that Thomson was one of the choice and master spirits of the time.

I have not got his volume "Satires and Profanities," which appeared in 1884 by me, but here is a passage I have copied out: it will suffice:

"This great river of human Time, which comes flowing down thick with filth and blood from the immemorial past, surely cannot be thoroughly cleansed by any purifying process applied to it here in the present; for the pollution, if not at its very source (supposing it has a source) or deriving from unimaginable remotenesses of eternity indefinitely beyond its source, at any rate interfused with it countless ages back, and is perennial as the river itself. This immense poison-tree of Life, with its leaves of illusion, blossoms of delirium, apples of destruction, surely cannot be made wholesome and sweet by anything we may do to the branchlets and twigs on which, poor insects, we find ourselves crawling, or to the leaves and fruit on which we must fain feed; for the venom is

drawn up in the sap by the tap-roots plunged in abysmal depths of the past. This toppling and sinking house wherein we dwell cannot be firmly re-established, save by re-establishing from its lowest foundation upwards. In fine, *to thoroughly reform the present and the future we must thoroughly reform the past.*"

But what were the mishaps and injustices it may be asked which brought such splendid powers to wreck? The injustices were mainly of the time and place; the mishaps individual. His father was an officer in the merchant marine who had the bad luck to get a paralytic stroke in 1840 and never recovered; his mother a deeply religious woman and mystic died in 1843, leaving James an orphan when a child of nine, to be brought up as a pauper on charity; not a bad start for a world-poet. He studied hard and became a schoolmaster in the British army about seventeen. A Mrs. Grieg says of him at this time: "He was wonderfully clever, very nice-looking and very gentle, grave and kind." Stationed in Ireland he made a friend of Charles Bradlaugh, then a private, and fell in love with a beautiful girl. Having won her affection, he returned to England at nineteen to gain a better position in order to marry her. Six months later she died suddenly. All through his life he ascribed his downfall to losing her. Almost the last poem he wrote was written of

her thirty years later under the title, "I Had a Love." ("Too hard and harsh, too true to be good poetry," is Thomson's comment on it.) I quote one verse, for it tells everything:

"You would have kept me from the desert sands,
Bestrewn with bleaching bones,
And led me through the friendly fertile lands,
And changed my weary moans
To hymns of triumph and enraptured love,
And made our earth as rich as Heaven above."

As a young man he was strong, we are told; a good oarsman and walker; he thought nothing of walking from the Curragh Camp to Dublin and back in the day, and by all accounts was very vivacious and an excellent companion. A real student, too, he taught himself German, Italian, French and a good deal of Spanish and some Latin, etc. But even as a young man of twenty or twenty-one, he occasionally drank to excess in a convivial way, and the evil tendency grew on him as the injustices of life began to eat into his pride.

We are told that "unfortunately he did not get on well with the officers." From the fact that he had made Bradlaugh, though a private, his closest friend, one can imagine how the officers would regard him. He was always a free thinker with pronounced radical views; naturally British officers were ready to pick a quarrel with a genius who assuredly did not share their

admiration of themselves. Thomson was dismissed from the British army for trivial contempt called insubordination in 1862—a heavy and undeserved blow.

A couple of years before he had begun writing for *The National Reformer*, which had been founded by Bradlaugh. Now at a loose end he came to London and Bradlaugh got him a place in a solicitor's office; he was still only twenty-eight. His wages plus all he received from his writing hardly averaged ten dollars a week for the next ten years of his life, the best years. Under such conditions and conscious of great powers, it was only to be expected that the melancholy he inherited from his mother would increase. He began periodically to drink to excess. He fought a desperate battle with this propensity. For months he would be sober and then some setback in life would excite his pessimism and he would begin to brood, then to drink. After the bout he'd "purge and live cleanly" again for months.

At all times he took his work most seriously like all who have it in them to do great work.

In 1864 he had written two or three articles for the *Daily Telegraph*; it is said that the editor offered him a retaining fee "to write like that," and then asked him, "Can you write pathos?" which ended their relation. Some of his best poetry was rejected by four or five of

the chief magazines. In 1874 his great poem, "The City of Dreadful Night," began to appear piecemeal in *The National Reformer* and won him new friends. Swinburne, George Eliot and Meredith wrote warmest praise to him, and Bertram Dobell grew really fond of him and helped him later to publish his books. It brought him another friend, Phillip Bourke Marston, who remained, as I have said, faithful to the end.

In 1875 he had a sort of disagreement with Bradlaugh; was crowded out of the paper and the misunderstanding was accentuated, it was said, by Mrs. Besant, and so the friendship of twenty years came to an end.

In "The City of Dreadful Night" Thomson has given us a portrait of Bradlaugh speaking as the pessimist-prophet; it is at once a tribute to his affection for the friend and a noble appreciation of the reformer's high qualities. The subsequent quarrel never induced Thomson to withdraw or modify any part of his eulogy.

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"And then we heard a voice of solemn stress
From the dark pulpit, and our gaze there met
Two eyes which burned as never eyes burned yet;

Two steadfast and intolerable eyes
Burning beneath a broad and rugged brow;
The head behind it of enormous size.

And as black fir-groves in a large wind bow,
Our rooted congregation, gloom-arrayed,
By that great sad voice deep and full were swayed:—

O melancholy Brothers, dark, dark, dark!
O battling in black floods without an ark!
O spectral wanderers of unholy Night!
My soul hath bled for you these sunless years,
With bitter blood-drops running down like tears:
Oh, dark, dark, dark, withdrawn from joy and light!"

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From this time on he wrote little poetry and was content to get his prose accepted by the *Secularist*, a new weekly and anti-religious review established by G. W. Foote. But his chief source of livelihood came from writing for *Cope's Tobacco Plant*, a monthly edited as an advertising medium for a firm of Liverpool tobacco merchants. This is how England treated one of her most gifted and greatest sons.

At Christmas, 1878, he could say that he had not earned a penny in the year save from his papers in Fraser's Magazine, hardly two hundred dollars in all. At the end of 1879 he was only writing for Cope "barely managing to keep his head over water, sometimes sinking under for a bit." Was it any wonder that this gentle, genial, gifted spirit grew tired of the long struggle? Again and again in 1879 he speaks of rheumatic pains; it is plain that his health was breaking; his "old friend insomnia" too had come back again to make night even more hideous than the day. He fell more and more completely under the influence of drink and the story of the close of Thomson's life is that of a man who had lost all desire to live; "his later

life was a slow suicide, perceived and acquiesced in deliberately by himself." In 1880 Dobell got his first book of poems published in book form; it won him friends and fifty dollars in cash, as poor Thomson writes hopefully. Meredith introduced him to editors and his work began to be asked for, but the help came too late. He was now forty-six and, perhaps, beyond saving. At least it would have needed some extraordinary circumstance to have saved him. Meredith, with his preternatural sagacity, seems to have divined this after his death.

The one gleam of brightness that came before the end intensifies to me the tragedy of the final disaster. His second volume of poems was produced almost immediately after the first and was also successful. And these books brought him some new friends, among them a Mr. and Miss Barrs, brother and sister, who asked him down to stay with them in the country. He went to them again and again and found perfect hospitality; he seems indeed to have felt deeply for Miss Barrs, because on his forty-seventh birthday he writes to H. A. B.:

"When one is forty years and seven

Is seven and forty sad years old,

He looks not onward for his heaven,

The future is too blank and cold,

Its pale flowers smell of graveyard mould,

He looks back to his lifeful past;

If age is silver, youth is gold;—
Could youth but last, could youth but last!"

Then there are the stanzas entitled "At Belvoir" with this memorable verse:

"A maiden like a budding rose,
Unconscious of the golden
And fragrant bliss of love that glows
Deep in her heart infolden;
A Poet old in years and thought,
Yet not too old for pleasance,
Made young again and fancy-fraught
By such a sweet friend's presence."

The poem entitled "He Heard Her Sing" tells of Thomson's passionate love of music and his deep feeling for this lady.

He visited the Barrs again in the spring of 1882, but he let himself go and the visit ended in a fit of intemperance. He crept back to London in bitterest remorse and final despair. On April 22, 1882, we find him writing to Mr. Barrs:

"I scarcely know how to write to you after my atrocious and disgusting return for the wonderful hospitality and kindness of yourself and Miss Barrs. I can only say that I was mad."

Very soon afterwards comes an unforgettable picture of him by Mr. Stewart Ross:

"He stands before me now as distinctly as he did nearly seven years ago among the well-dressed people at that glittering bar—he, the

abject, the shabby, the waif. . . . His figure, which had always been diminutive, had lost all dignity of carriage, all gracefulness of gait. When the miserable hat was raised from the ruined but still noble head it revealed the thinning away of the ragged and unkempt hair, deeply threaded with grey. His raiment had the worn, soiled and deeply creased aspect that suggested . . . it had been worn day and night. The day, for May, was a raw and cold one, with a drizzle, and the feet of the author of 'The City of Dreadful Night' were protected from the slushy streets only by a pair of thin old carpet-slippers, so worn and defective that, in one part, they displayed his bare skin."

The summing up is given in a letter of Meredith's:

"He did me the honor to visit me twice, when I was unaware of the extent of the tragic affliction overclouding him, but could see that he was badly weighted. I have now the conviction that the taking away of poverty from his burdens would in all likelihood have saved him to enrich our literature; for his verse was a pure well. He had, almost past example in my experience, the thrill of the worship of moral valiancy as well as of sensuous beauty; his narrative poem, 'Weddah and Om-el-Bonain,' stands to witness what great things he would have done in the exhibition of nobility at war with evil conditions. He probably had, as most of us have

had, his heavy suffering on the soft side. But he inherited the tendency to the thing which slew him. And it is my opinion that, in consideration of his high and singularly elective mind, he might have worked clear of it to throw it off, if circumstances had been smoother and brighter about him." Such is Meredith's way of saying that England is a harsh stepmother to poets who dare to be thinkers and radicals though born poor. The true word is:

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

It might be well for us to ask ourselves how America treats her Thomsons. The reception accorded to Poe and Whitman should not flatter our self-esteem.



Thompson as I saw him in 1881.



Lionel Johnson

LIONEL JOHNSON and
HUBERT CRACKANTHORPE



T would take long to tell why these two men are associated in my memory. I saw a great deal of both of them about the same time in the early nineties; they were both very young and full of high promise in very different ways, and in both I felt a certain weakness of body, the premonition of untimely death and unfulfilled renown. They both felt the danger, I believe, knew that their hold on life was tenuous, weak and that the strands would part easily on any strain. Johnson wrote to a friend:

"Go from me: I am one of those who fall.
What! hath no cold wind swept your heart at all,
In my sad company? Before the end,
Go from me, dear, my friend!"

The "cold wind"—perhaps only the flighting of unseen wings—was sadly prophetic in Crackanthorpe's case, but not in Johnson's, thank goodness, for though he died at thirty-five he had already done excellent work in prose and verse which gives him a niche in the sanctuary of the spirit.

The two were in some sort complementary.

Crackanthorpe with shy ingenuous manners and outbursts of enthusiasm soon followed by fits of unaccountable, black depression, and Johnson very grave and perfectly poised, a sort of young old man. Yeats, his friend and contemporary, has painted him to the life in a phrase; he speaks of "the loneliness and gravity of his mind; its air of high lineage," this last clause the magical word only possible to a poet-spirit when touched with love.

THE NINETIES IN LONDON

The Nineties in London! Was there ever a period in any country when such great men lived and worked? There were Tennyson and Browning, Arnold and Swinburne, Meredith, Patmore and Aubrey de Vere among the older poets; and in science and thought, Darwin, Lyell, Kelvin, Huxley, Spencer and Wallace.

And the wonderful thing was that for the most part these subtle and great minds were familiar spirits of easy approach and much more apt to be enthusiastic about young talent than men of small accomplishment. One could meet and talk to any of them almost any day; indeed a week seldom passed for years in which I did not meet one or more of them in friendly intercourse.

They had little or nothing new to tell one; they had given their best in their books; but it was intensely interesting to lead them on to answer the questionings of sense and outward

things which passages in their writings suggested.

Did Darwin or Spencer or Huxley see that the gorgeous soapbubble of theory that they had blown was only a toy to amuse the mind and did not lead one into the secret purpose of things at all or strip a single veil from the mysterious Goddess of Life?

Why had Browning said so little about his great contemporaries? Swinburne and Arnold, Patmore and Meredith talked freely of one another, were never tired indeed of drawing lines of relationship from themselves to other Immortals, but Browning was curiously reticent.

These questions and a thousand like them I put and had answered, and they led to deeper confessions and more intimate questionings.

Was Swinburne's erotic poetry a mirror of his life?

What was the mystery about Meredith? Was he the illegitimate son of some great personage or was the tailor his father?

How did Patmore come to be a Catholic mystic who spoke of Saint Augustine and Santa Theresa as if they had been his brother and sister?

Who was it Browning wanted to possess in that
Last Ride Together
when the desire makes the page glow and gives
the words pulses.

And the younger men were even more interesting; for promise is more exciting than performance.

Housman with his "Shropshire Lad," and Dowson, Symons and Horne, Francis Thompson, John Grey and Alfred Douglas, Mrs. Meynell, too, and Mary Robinson and Michael Field—singers enough, and a crowd of novelists, playwrights and painters still more distinguished: Whistler, Pater and Wilde, Kipling, Shaw, Beardsley, Pryde and Wells; Augustus John, Sime and Max, to say nothing of the band of gifted Irishmen, Yeats, Moore, Synge, and "A. E."

And these men were all eager and enthusiastic; good work done and better projected. One could warm oneself with their hope. Almost any afternoon I could hear Kipling read a new poem, some "Gunga Din" that heated the blood like rich Burgundy and when he had gone, leaving the air still throbbing with the martial words and the lilting music, in would come Beardsley with a cover of "The Yellow Book" which Lane had accepted and praised and then at the last moment when his eyes had been opened, had suppressed in horror and resentment at nudities "no one could stand; perfectly disgraceful!"

Looking a mere boy Beardsley would point to this scabrous detail and to that: "I see nothing wrong with the drawing; do you?" as if

puddenda were ears to be studied in every whorl or breasts rounded merely to show how perfection of line makes shading superfluous.

And scarcely had we finished laughing when Wilde would come in or Jimmy Pryde, the one resolved to take us to dinner with Pater or Whistler and the other proposing a meeting of artists at the Arts Club.

And the men and women one met at that club in Chelsea! Will Rothenstein with his vivid eager face and keen intelligence; Herbert Trench with a new poem of wrought perfectness; Arthur Machen with his head of prophet-priest and a new story of the Oxford Actors—and the talk vivid, enthusiastic, pointed with wit or barbed with sarcastic epigram. One telling how his new book had been suppressed by some magistrate or “Bayswatered” by the publisher burst out—“I told him what I thought of him, though, the fool. In a moment I was boiling.”

“Don’t say that,” broke in a quiet voice. “To come to boiling point so quickly, argues a vacuum in the upper regions.”

Ah, the delighted laughter and the wild outbursts of joy; the exuberance of youth, shot through with the wisdom and irony of mature understanding.

HUBERT CRACKANTHORPE

And in this rich, passionate, pulsing life these

two appeared and made for themselves a place; Crackanthorpe in spite of his shy timidity and Johnson in spite of his boyish face and preternatural gravity. They were both small. Crackanthorpe, just below medium height, slight and white faced, with eyes like pale Parma violets and hesitating light voice growing confident and firm, however, in praise. Johnson, smaller still, though not so frail, with large head and assured quiet manner to match the arrogant, steady, thoughtful eyes.

Crackanthorpe came with a letter of introduction and wished me to read a short story, "A Conflict of Egotisms." As soon as I took it up, it interested me; a sort of impersonal detachment in it curiously revealing personality, especially the description of the writer who "had learnt nothing from modern methods, either French or English; he belonged to no clique, he had no followers, he stood quite alone. He had few friends or acquaintances, not from misanthropy, sound or morbid, but the accumulated result of years of voluntary isolation."

This "sound or morbid" showed a mind that had hatched out some eggs for itself and a little later a description fascinated me:

"The shower had been a fierce one, covering the roadway with a thick crop of rain spikes, filling the gutters with rushing rivulets of muddy water; now, through a rift in the ink-colored

clouds, the sunlight was filtering feebly, and the swirl of the downpour had subsided to a gentle patter."

The "rain spikes" and sunlight "filtering feebly" struck me as the painting words of a real writer and I praised him accordingly. I found him essentially modest though he knew his own value.

"Do you think I'll ever do anything worth while?"

"You have already. No one can say how far you'll go; even now your work is a master's."

"How kind of you! But don't spare blame, please! I want the truth."

"Well, I miss the joy of living, the youthful spring and all-conquering desire. Your work is sad, detached from life, curiously aloof, almost indifferent."

"One can only give what one has."

"Fall in love," I cried joyously, "over head and ears; that's the cure for you."

"Who knows," he answered wistfully. "Sometimes love frightens me. One might fail to win the pearl of great price or the shrine might be defiled."

"Nothing to hinder you trying again," I replied.

His eyebrows went up and we talked of other things; of books and men. On all sides his judgment was curiously mature, too mature for

his years. I felt the cold air of vague apprehension.

His first book, "Wreckage," made a stir, set the town talking; the "nineties" all eager to welcome talent.

One day I met him and praised one story in the book heartily: "'A Dead Woman' is great stuff," I cried, "go on: *you'll* go far."

"I've taken your prescription, too," he replied shyly, blushing like a girl.

"I'm glad," I cried, "love's the torch!"

A few months later I heard he was missing, no one seemed to know why or wherefore; time passed and the news came that his body had been found in the Seine at Paris. Life's waves had broken too heavily on him, or had the life-belt failed? I never knew.

For years his loss came back to me with a sting: "Why? Why? What a pity!" I could not help crying out whenever the thought of him came up. Against my will I kept on recalling our conversations and communing with his spirit till at length I seemed to find coherence and a meaning even in his self-destruction. A nympholept of Beauty, I said to myself, called to a perpetual seeking, when at length he found his Dream incarnate in the flesh he spent himself in impious adoration. There are souls so glad to give that life itself seems too poor an offering.

Was the mystery of poor Crackanthorpe's end
explained in Francis Thompson's lines?

Beauty, to adore and dream on—

To be

Perpetually

Hers, but she never his.

Better the Seine water than such Tantalus-
torture!

LIONEL JOHNSON

Lionel Johnson was of stouter stuff. The best years of his life were spent in London and just cover the decade 1891-1901. He was an amalgam of English and Welsh with a strong strain of Irish blood that he came to prize highly. He had left Oxford with a great reputation for scholarship and talent and he set to work at once in London writing for the more serious weeklies. His "Post Liminium or Essays" represent one-quarter of these contributions.

All his prose work is on the same high level distinguished by a balanced gravity of judgment illumined whenever necessary by apt quotation; first-rate journalism passing every now and then into literature when winged by some passionate emotion. Here is a note on Francis Thompson, hard to better for sympathy and sureness of appreciation:

"Magnificently faulty at times, magnificently perfect at others. The ardors of poetry, taking you triumphantly by storm; a surging sea of

verse, rising and falling and irresistibly advancing. Drunk with his inspiration, sometimes helplessly so; more often he is merely fired and quickened, and remains master of himself. Has done more to harm the English language than the worst American newspapers; *corruptio optimi pessima*. Has the opulent, prodigal manner of the seventeenth century; a profusion of great imagery, sometimes excessive and false; another opulence and profusion, that of Shelley in his lyric choruses. Beneath the outward manner, a passionate reality of thought; profound, pathetic, full of faith without fear. "Words that, if you pricked them, would bleed," as was said of Meredith. Incapable of prettiness and pettiness; for good and bad, always vehement and burning and—to use a despised word—sublime. *Sublime*, rather than *noble*! too fevered to be austere; a note of ardent suffering, not of endurance."

Johnson's volume on "The Art of Hardy," shows him even better; but I was always sorry that he had not decided to write on his old tutor and friend, Walter Pater, whom he loved and admired intensely. A book on Pater by Johnson would have been of extraordinary value, for Johnson always seemed to me curiously akin to Pater, both in nature and in talent. He has written half a dozen different papers on him, but I wish he had given a volume to him instead

of to Hardy, for not only was he like Pater, but in some ways superior. With the exception of the single page on the Mona Lisa I take more pleasure in reading Johnson's prose than Pater's and when it comes to lyric flights I prefer them in verse. Now Johnson was a skilled craftsman in poetry; you find verse after verse with some new cadence or curious felicity of expression.

Everyone knows his valedictory on Parnell which gives the soul of Ireland:

"I cannot praise our dead,
Whom Ireland weeps so well:
Her morning light, that fled;
Her morning star, that fell.

.
Home to her heart she drew
The mourning company:
Old sorrows met the new,
In sad fraternity.

.
A mother, and forget?
Nay! all her children's fate
Ireland remembers yet,
With love insatiate."

Yet as if prophetic of the future he sings England too and above all Oxford, and above even Oxford, Pater:

"Half of a passionately pensive soul
He showed us, not the whole:
Who loved him best, they best, they only knew,
The deeps they might not view:
That which was private between God and him:
To others justly dim." . . .

I do not hold Johnson up as a great poet; he was too thought-burdened ever to sing freely; but he had the gift; and could sing in Latin as in English with a haunting melody.

I always hoped he would write some great lyric page on friendship for he was singularly gifted with sympathy, a soul like some Aeolian harp tuned to respond to every breath of affection and with this rare sensitiveness, an equable kind temper, a mind of high lineage.

Like Crackanthorpe, Johnson came to an untimely end. He had rooms in Clifford's Inn and was ailing all through the winter of 1901-2. In the summer he gradually got better, was himself again when he met with an accident and died within a week.

I am not sure that his name will live; I much fear that his work will hardly find a place in English literature. I know that Thomson wrote incomparably greater poetry and as good prose, too, and yet is hardly known save to lovers of letters; yet I always have had a soft spot in me of liking for Lionel Johnson, for his steadfast eyes and air of resolute self-possession. And often his words reach the heart and are unforgettable, an echo of the sad music of man's mortality. Take the last lines in his song to the Dark Angel:

*Lonely unto the lone I go
Divine, to the Divinity.*

No wonder he put the couplet into italics; there is in it all his heart's yearning for affection together with the proud self-consciousness of the great artist.

I cannot mourn for these men as cut off untimely leaving their best unsaid, the sweetest songs unsung. I have a sort of superstition that no one dies till the soul in him has finished growing, till his best work is all done. Had Crackanthorpe more to give, or Johnson, or Keats? I doubt it. We have got their best; Shakespeare was given time even to finish "The Tempest"; Cervantes did not put his "foot in the stirrup" till the second part of "Don Quixote" was in men's hands. Yet the pathos of untimely loss is there and the passionate regret:

*Lonely unto the lone I go
Divine, to the Divinity.*

PIERRE LOTI: A LORD OF LANGUAGE



T was in Paris in 1887, I believe, at a costume ball given by Madame Adam, then editor of *La Nouvelle Revue*, that I first heard of Loti. He had come dressed as a Pharaoh and his costume of Rameses II. was a marvel, it was said, of artistic weirdness and antiquarian correctitude. He was pointed out to me seated in a room talking to a lady; his youth excused his pretentiously quaint costume, and I was naturally curious to learn all I could about him. Who was he? What had he done to become a personage in a day?

"He's a young sailor," I was told, "a lieutenant in the Navy, who in his very first book brought a new atmosphere into French fiction, and even taught French prose a new music or at least new cadences and dowered it with a sort of Biblical or Breton sadness and resignation: *Il faut lire ça; ah, oui; you must read him!*"

His real name, it appeared, was Julien Viaud; he was born at Rochefort-on-Sea, of Protestant stock, brought up, therefore, on the Bible; had traveled widely. Queen Pomare of Tahiti had given him the name of Loti, after an oceanic flower.



Pierre Loti

Oddly enough, that first dawn of fame in Paris was all admiration and romance, colored by a rich glow of exoticism that appeared to silence judgment and suspend even sane appreciation. Paris was like a child with a new toy, and wouldn't even believe that it could ever find fault or flaw in its plaything.

In the next week or so I read "Le Mariage de Loti." Was it Viaud's first book or merely the first that happened to fall into my hands? I could not say. It does not matter much, for in any case that delicate and passionate idyll of love on an island of the southern Pacific was not a bad way of meeting Loti. The Tahitian girl, Rarahu, is as attractive and exciting as a model of Gauguin. Her love-letters have something of the savage about them—a mixture of childishness and passion—a new and heady intoxicant. From that moment I was one of Loti's admirers; but by the following season Paris had changed. Suddenly, as in an hour, the gay child had grown tired of her new doll, had learned its tricks, so to speak, and was eager to show that its mechanism had not fooled her for a moment; she had always known that its roundnesses were only sawdust—"Loti—un espece de Chateaubriand (a sort of Chateaubriand)—un rhetoricien, un romantique—quoi!" with a shrug of disdainful denigration. And when I objected to this summary classification and suggested that

he might yet write a great sea-epic, a wonderful song of life and love, I was met by doubt, disbelief, masking a profound indifference. One cried at me:

"Don't you know the story of Loti?"

"One day the Duchess of —— asked him to a reception and he turned up with a big sailor: *mon frere Ives*, if you please. That finished him off; that was too much for even feminine admiration," and they all laughed.

Paris accepts a talent promptly, eagerly, particularly if it is strange and bizarre, but Paris drops it just as quickly. It is only the Hugos and Balzacs who can hold that fickle charming mistress, and they hold her by strength and courage and ever-renewed conquest.

I read all Loti's books as they came out, "*Mon Frere Ives*," "*Pêcheur d'Islande*," and the rest, and my admiration grew deeper, broader-based. Loti, I used to say to myself, was the true laureate of the ocean, the singer of the sea, without a rival in any language. Yet up to that time I had thought the shipwreck in "*Don Juan*" hard to beat.

The sea has inspired a great many poets and has been the theme of much excellent writing. Keats's lines:—

"The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round Earth's human shores,"
are of course incomparable, seem indeed to

touch the zenith of accomplishment, though one has to admit that he borrowed the sentiment from Euripides. By the way, Matthew Arnold once quoted this couplet and characteristically, as I think, changed "pure" into "cold." Nevertheless, his own great line, "the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea," shows that he too was haunted by the loneliness and mystery of the great deep, though he does not love it with the awe and passion of Loti, whose very soul seems to have been colored by it and tuned to it.

There is a description of a storm in "Mon Frere Ives," I think, or it may be in even an earlier book, which has in it all the magic of the sea, from the organ music of its deep to the swirl and snarl of its surface, from the scream of the wind to its thunder, and Loti has unleashed about one the elemental forces of Nature—unconscious and irresistible—forces that make one shiver with the sense of man's frailty and man's mortality. Loti's soul has been formed by the sea, and no one has ever painted a mistress in all her moods with more consummate artistry.

Conrad, too, has depicted a storm with an astounding cunning that reminds me of Loti. I forget the name of the book, but Conrad realizes the sailormen at the same time, whereas in Loti I get nothing but the sea and the tempest and Death triumphant riding on the wings of the wind.

Naturally I was eager to meet him, this singer of the great Deep, and I did meet him some years later in the palace at Monaco by a window that looked out over the garden to the sun-kissed wavelets of the Mediterranean.

There is a great text in Corinthians:

"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body . . . for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal . . . immortality."

But suppose it's the other way about and the immortal puts on mortality and the spirit a natural body before your eyes? I had already had many disillusionings of the sort, many proofs that what Shakespeare calls "this muddy vesture of decay," this outward bodily presentment of us men, has no relation to the soul; but never was the disillusion more astonishing.

Loti was in the trim uniform of a French naval lieutenant that accentuated his tiny figure. He is about five feet four in height, slight and straight. And surely he wears corsets; it is hardly possible that a man should have so slim and round a waist! And surely his cheeks are rouged; the rose flush is too artistically perfect to be natural. We are introduced: his voice is a thin treble: "*Heureux, monsieur, de faire votre connaissance . . . la Princesse m'a beaucoup parlé de vous*" (Happy to make your acquaintance; the Princess has often spoken to me

of you). His hand is the hand of a child.

"*Mon Frere Ives*," "My Brother Ives," the big strong sailorman, the hero of the romance, flashes into my mind with another meaning: the inference irresistible! Surely the comedy of life is inexhaustible and staged by a master of the unexpected.

Loti's face is wistful in expression; something querulous veils the melancholy of the eyes; the lips are rather thick, the nose a little fleshy; one returns to the eyes; they meet you with a shade of distrust and apprehension, like those of a dog that has often been punished; underneath they are sad, sad. . . .

The Princess Alice was one of Loti's earliest and most enthusiastic admirers; she told me that his name was taken from a rare tropical flower that floats on water, "le loti."

"He is 'a sensitive,'" she insisted, "who carries about with him an eternal regret. He would have liked, above everything, to be big and strong . . . a sailor-lover—and he's tiny: he resents it. One should be considerate of him and not in words only, but in looks and manner; he's very affectionate underneath. . . ."

I was so interested that I did not need the warning; I was full of sympathy for the great craftsman, eager to know where he had learned the varied music of his rhythms, the inevitable painting words of his prose; above all, what had

helped him to his immediate bare vision of things?

Gradually, under my warm admiration, he thawed out. I had asked him did he know Bourget (another friend of the Princess) or Renan?

"No," he answered, "no, I never read, you know," and then the astounding confession—"I have never read anything . . . no, not even Chateaubriand . . . though he has been called my master," and he smiled deprecatingly.

"Really?" I exclaimed: "but of course you've read Montaigne, Moliere, Racine, La Fontaine, the classics?"

"Not one of them," he replied: "a good deal of the Bible as a boy and since I grew up a few of my friends' books; for example, 'Chantepleure,' which I think excellent. . . ."

"But in the long days and nights at sea between watches: don't you read?"

"No," he replied, "no, I muse. I recall past experiences to memory; but that's all."

"Where did you get your style from?" I exclaimed.

He shrugged his shoulders: "I don't know; do you think reading helps you much?"

"No, I don't," I was fain to admit.

Loti's experience in this matter amplified and supported my own and strengthened a belief of mine which is novel and altogether out of tune

with the spirit of our time. I used to say that whatever originality I possessed was due to the fact that when I was a lad I passed the two formative years from sixteen as a cowboy, without books, and consequently was forced to answer all the questionings of sense and outward things for myself and furnish myself with a new creed, and so learned to think—a part of education almost wholly neglected today. I profited so much by this discipline that later when a book like Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship" fell into my hands I would not read it; I preferred to think over the subject for myself and then read the book just to see how much Carlyle could enlarge or modify the conclusions to which I had come.

To reading one owes little! it adds nothing to mental power; it only swells the wallet of memory one has to carry. But thinking enlarges the mind and invigorates it, just as exercise invigorates the body.

And now in Loti I had found a man who owed his direct and personal vision of things to the fact that he had never read, had used his own eyes and not the eyes of other men. He was a master of the most musical French prose without knowing anything of the great rhetoricians who had preceded him; without having learned a cadence from Bossuet or an epithet from Chateaubriand or Gautier.

I thus came to believe that cheap books and papers are a hindrance to originality and not a help; in the future men will read less and think more. What a good thing it would be if here in America men would prohibit newspapers instead of wine. Wine helps digestion and adds to the harmless pleasures of life, while newspapers are seldom worth reading, and the habit of glancing at them every hour or two, without thinking, is more injurious to the mind than even dram drinking is to the body.

Take up Bacon's "Essays" or Schopenhaur's and you will see at once that both these men have thought and come to their own conclusions without help from others, and how much "meatier" and more nourishing they are than the literary apes who brag of being "sedulous" in parrotting.

I am not sure that Loti wears well; he is too sad. "*Pêcheur d'Islande*" is perhaps his best and most characteristic book; yet he only gives Gaud, the charming heroine, a week of married happiness when Yann, her stalwart husband, sails away on that voyage to the Iceland fishing from which he never returned. It is too little joy for a whole life-time of sorrow.

I pick up another book of Loti's at haphazard and find that toward the end he has told how a common sailor has climbed as high as he can get in the French Navy, has become senior war-

rant officer, and at length has reached the age of compulsory retirement. He has dreamt of freedom for thirty-odd years, has pictured to himself the comfort and ease of unconstrained idleness; he will have a house of his own; a bed, a real bed to sleep in, and a little garden; fresh vegetables—a lazy quiet time for years before the inevitable end.

“Jean Kervella comes to the cottage he has bought on the road between Brest and Portzic; it has a noble view of the harbor and ocean and quite a large garden; a wonder-plot. He hangs up his silver whistle over the chimney and sits down to enjoy himself by his own fireside in peace. It’s going to be a wild night; he can hear the swing of the waves on the whinstone crags and that moan in the wind is not to be mistaken; the clouds, too, are full of menace; but what need he care? it can blow to split tarpaulins while he lies snug.

“His thoughts went back to his earlier life and his little girl who died while he was in Tonquin, and in the quiet and silence slow tears gathered in his eyes, as stone sweats moisture, and sadness came upon him and the tears pour down his face like rain and drip over his thick gray beard. It is not regret but just profound sadness, an intimate distress, and he breaks down at length in wild sobbing, with only one desire

at the heart of him, to be done with it all and be at rest in the grave."

I know no sadder page; it cannot be read without tears the first time and it is too sad to read again. But the books we love, the books that will live, are those we read again and again and draw fresh encouragement from revived hope and courage wound up.

After all, we say Loti is too much of a pessimist, too disenchanted, a little morbid, even. He has never married and his life is lonely. Life is harsh enough to the sensitive ones and cold to passionate lovers; but in spite of everything life is not so cruel as Loti paints it, and perhaps it's a great writer's privilege to depict it as just a little better and happier than it is on the principle laid down by Goethe when he said: "Give me your beliefs and affirmations; they encourage and stimulate me; but keep your doubts and fears to yourself; I have enough of my own." An English writer says:

*"Life is mostly froth and trouble,
Two things stand like stone;
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own."*

And so I say the brave guides will make little of the rough places and untoward accidents of this earthly pilgrimage and will dwell on the joyous happenings, the dramatic chances and romantic meetings of the great adventure.



Walter Pater

WALTER PATER.



EARS before I met Pater I had heard of him. After going round the world I returned to England and was spending the summer in Tenby, a lovely place on the shore of South Wales. There I met an Oxford graduate; I forget his name and all about him save that he preached Pater, Pater unregenerate, Pater the Pagan. He showed me long passages of Pater's essays on the "Renaissance" and I went down before him. Later I read Theophile Gautier in Paris and found him the greater man and greater writer with essentially the same mental outlook. But for the moment I was carried off my feet by Pater's carven prose and enquired about him sedulously. My friend told me that he knew him as a professor and lecturer on Plato and more than hinted that Pater was looked upon in Oxford with suspicion as the apostle of an esoteric cult, the apologist of strange sins. Not knowing then how common this perversion is in England, I was a little startled and tremendously curious. I asked him for proofs, for some evidence, but could get none.

A little later Mallock's "New Republic" appeared and apparently made a similar accusation

of perverse self-indulgence. Mr. Rose was evidently intended to be a sketch of Pater, and Rose confessed to a liking for erotic books and talked so that Lady Ambrose says: "Mr. Rose always speaks of people as if they had no clothes on."

What foundation there may have been for the darker suspicion, I did not and do not know, am inclined indeed to believe that there was nothing but Pater's talk that could be offered in evidence; nothing more than such slander as springs up against superiority, such supposition as may be drawn from inference.

My interest in Pater thereby quickened, I read all he had written, and even in his journalism found nothing offensive, though I marked a score of passages that might give pause to the puritan. He talks once—I forget in what essay—of a Shakespearean actor with a face of "not quite reassuring subtlety, who might pass for the original of those Italian or Italianized ('Italianate' was the contemptuous Elizabethan adjective) voluptuaries in sin which pleased the fancy of Shakespeare's age." There is nothing in this if you like; but read carefully in puritanic England there is contempt for the ordinary prejudice in that ironical "not quite reassuring subtlety," and a gloating approval of "voluptuaries in sin," which goes far to explain how the suspicion may have arisen as to Pater's morals.

"But who are you," I said to myself, "to sit in judgment on another man or condemn his appreciations?"

Seven or eight years afterwards, in London, I met Pater in the flesh, met him again and again before I began to know him. He had lunched with me, dined with me a dozen times before he asked me to tea with his sisters and then much later to dinner. He was the last man in the world to wear his heart on his sleeve, or give his confidence lightly. For several years he held back from me, seemed surprised that I should pursue him with friendly invitations, should desire his company. And indeed for a long time he was among the dullest and most irresponsible of guests.

But the contrast between the person Pater and his writings intrigued me, excited curiosity; the old suspicion implanted in me would not be laid. There was something enigmatical in his aloofness, his studied reticence:—What was it?

In person Pater gave one the impression of being big and heavy; he was only about five feet nine or ten in height, stoutly built though neither muscular nor fat; but he moved slowly, deliberately, and so conveyed the feeling of weight. When he took off his hat the impression was deepened; his face is perfectly given in Will Rothenstein's outline sketch; a great domed forehead, massive features, closed eyes and mouth

hidden under a heavy dark moustache; the tell-tale features all concealed—blinds, so to speak, before the windows of the soul.

When Pater looked at you, you were surprised by the naked glance of the gray-green eyes. The eyes revealed nothing; they were hard, bare, scrutinizing. He had surely something strange, unique, to say, this man. Why did he not say it?

He dressed conventionally; so perfectly in the convention that he must have sought to evade notice; why? He talked in the same way conventional courtesies, warding off enquiry; inquisitiveness he met with monosyllables or merely by raising of eyebrows. What had he to hide or to confess?

I still recall my surprise when I went to Pater's to dinner for the first time. It was an ordinary, little, middle-class English house; no distinction about it of any kind. I had expected a wonderful house, or unique decoration, or if not that, at least a rare sketch, or plaster cast, a sixteenth century book, a superb binding—something that would suggest this man's lifelong devotion to art, his single-hearted passionate adoration of all the sanctities of plastic loveliness. Not a sign of this; hardly a hint. The house might have belonged to a grocer; might have been furnished by one, only a grocer would not have been content with its total absence of

ornament, its austere simplicity. Clearly Pater's inspiration did not depend on surroundings.

Pater's sisters were two colorless spinsters of a certain age. They talked little—a pair of mid-Victorian ladies, prudish, reserved, meticulously correct. Was it their influence, or what was it that kept the talk in the shallows? I asked them about life in Oxford; “did they prefer it to the life in London?”

“No,” they thought they liked London best. One of them said quietly it was a richer life, but the other hesitated: “Oxford is so beautiful.”

Thinking it all over afterwards, analyzing my disappointment, the sisters and the house seemed to me to represent the decorous dullness which Pater fled in order to indulge his dreams of a fuller and more passionate life in creative art. Writing, I think, of Amiens Cathedral, he speaks somewhere of “conceptions embodied in cliffs of carved stone all the more welcome as a complement to the meagreness of most people's present existence.” He was under the influence of this “meagreness, for when I tried to ask him about his work he answered me reluctantly in monosyllables. He spoke in a low voice that seemed measured, though he often hesitated, picking his words, intent on saying just what he wished to say. There was no music in his utterance, no thrill; it was lifeless, impassive like his face.

“Had you your essays on the Renaissance long in hand?” I asked, knowing that most of them

had appeared first in *The Fortnightly Review*, some as early as 1868, though the volume was not published till 1873.

His brow wrinkled and he seemed a little perplexed.

"I suppose so; I do not remember very well."

"I always think," I went on, "that Sainte Beuve's 'Lundis' are so good because he had written most of the essays again and again for newspapers before finally polishing and publishing them in book form."

Pater still wore his reluctant, hesitating air. "I try to make my first draft as complete as I can."

I thought by showing more intimate interest that I might arouse him, so I began:

"Long before I read your wonderful essay, I was puzzled by the smile of the Mona Lisa. It was more perfect still in Leonardo's St. John in the Louvre, probably because the painting has not been so tampered with. The mouth is smiling, but if you cover it, you will find the eyes are serious, searching, questioning. It is the question in the eyes in contrast with the smiling lips, that gives the enigmatic expression. Years later I found Leonardo himself had explained the smile in this way, so my guess was right. It pleased me inordinately at the time to have divined the '*procédé*' (I did not wish to say 'trick')."

Pater contented himself with nodding his head, so I dashed on:

"Of course, the painting is a poor thing; but your page on it is, I think, the best page in all English prose."

His brow cleared, and half smiling he murmured: "Kind of you."

"How did you write it? Did you take especial pains with it? But of course you did. Even Shakespeare rewrote his principal passages a dozen times."

"I take special pains," he replied, "with every page—indeed with every sentence."

Later I found out what he meant by especial pains.

When he had something new to express he used to say the idea over and over again to himself and then write it fairly on a little slip of paper. He would carry with him for a walk perhaps half a dozen of these slips loose in his pocket. When he found himself in a different mood, by the riverside in Oxford, or under the trees of Kensington Gardens, he would take out a slip, repeat the sentence to himself again, correct the English now here, now there, and finally perhaps end by finding a new form altogether for the thought. When he came home he would write this new sentence down and carry it about with him for days till he was certain he could not improve on it. Jeweller's work, or rather

the work of some great lapidary, fashioning the stone to the idea in his mind, facet by facet with a loving solicitude, an inexhaustible patience.

I had to be content with gleaning such facts as this about him till I met him for the first time with Oscar Wilde. Then I found a different man.

I had invited them both to dinner and they were evidently delighted to meet. For some reason or other Oscar was not at his best; not so vivacious, so charming, as usual. He begged me to excuse him, hinting that I knew the cause of his depression, and this sign of intimacy transformed Pater. He moved freely, spoke freely, without hesitation, though still deliberately and manifestly with entire sincerity.

The change was marked to me by one incident.

It was about the time of the Dilke scandal, and Oscar plainly wishing to ingratiate me with Pater, told him how I had defended the famous Radical even in *The Evening News*, a Conservative daily paper which I was editing at the time.

"Frank is more than tolerant," Oscar remarked; "he has a positive liking for all sinners, even for strange sins—sins he's not inclined to."

"How did you come by such tolerance?" Pater asked.

"Native viciousness," I replied; "the cham-

bermaid's testimony that often three pillows were wanted for Dilke's bed amused me, and I hate even the word 'tolerance.' What human being has a right to assume that superior attitude to any other man or any fault? I have no condemnations in me."

Pater nodded approval, smiling.

The ice was broken once for all. From that moment Pater relaxed, began to let himself go, was willing even to make an effect; little jewels of expression, "carved ivories of speech," to use his own fine phrase, made their appearance in his talk; soul-revealing words like the praise he has given to Leonardo's illegitimate birth, ascribing to it some "puissance" of nature; in fine the real Pater showed himself ingenuously.

When he left he begged me to ask him again, the usual courtesies warmed now by sincere feeling.

I could not help telling Oscar how delightful it was to me that the buttoned up, precise Pater should have become so human, so interesting. "I could not make up my mind," I said, "whether he was merely shy, or afraid to let himself go."

"Not shy," Oscar rejoined, "but a burnt child; he used to speak very frankly in Oxford, I believe, till Mallock caricatured him."

"He's really a dear," he went on; "only a few of us know how kind he is, how really warm-hearted. Ever since Oxford he has been a friend

of mine; a great friend" he repeated with emphasis.

Even after this Pater, when in ordinary company, would use his old discretion; but at moments the sun shone and I felt its warmth always behind the cloud-cloak. Whenever a phrase pleased him the mask would drop. His heavy face would break into a smile, the green eyes would be turned on you with their enigmatic, lingering regard.

I well remember a dinner one summer evening in a room overlooking Hyde Park, when Matthew Arnold and Oscar were present. The charming enthusiasm with which Oscar had welcomed Arnold warmed our intercourse to immediate intimacy.

"How delightful to meet you, Master!" he cried. "To find Oxford and all the charm of Oxford here in London, with our host to suggest another life that certainly is not the life of Oxford;" and he laughed roguishly, with a touch of malice that set us all smiling.

Matthew Arnold was evidently flattered by his enthusiasm, and the dinner was a really wonderful symposium from the beginning; more magical I cannot but think than that symposium of Plato in which Socrates revealed the highest reach of the Greek spirit.

Any one of these men could have talked as lyrically about beauty, if he had wished, as

Socrates talked, and Oscar could certainly have talked better. What, after all, did the Greek say but what we all knew and felt; that one worships first the beauty of form and color and then the beauty of great lives nobly lived, and so we're led to the feet of that supernal loveliness of which all our creations are only reflections, shadow-shapes of the divine made palpable.

I do not know how the conversation fell on style, but I remember desiring a definition of it.

Neither of the poets would attempt any formula for poetry, but Pater said he had some ideas about style that he was going to put on paper and I begged him to send me the essay as soon as it was completed, which he afterwards did. It is not important; has no place, I think, in his best work.

But on the question of prose style they all had opinions. Oscar thought that a perfect prose style should be the style of conversation at its best; "interspersed, of course," he added laughing, "with lyrical monologues"; and he smiled with pleasure at having defended his own practice.

"I do not altogether agree with you," Matthew Arnold objected:

"Surely the style of conversation is a little too light, too loose, too careless. I should say there must be something monumental in perfect style; phrases such as one would write on a memorial

tablet; there should be a sententious brevity, a weightiness about any utterance that is intended to endure."

"Would you alter that definition?" I asked Pater.

"I don't think prose has anything to do with talk," he answered. "I think it should be a perfect expression of one's thought, but whether it is like conversation or not seems to me of no moment."

Max has since found the perfect word for Pater's prose, putting his finger at once on its excellence and its defect: "Pater," he said, "writes English as if he were writing Latin; he handles it as if it were a dead language."

"And you," said Matthew Arnold, turning to me, "you question us all, but you do not tell us your idea."

Challenged in this way I could only speak frankly:

"I like Boileau's phrase: *un style simple, serieux, scrupuleux va loin*; but style to me," I added, "has a thousand individualities. Style is the way great men talk. That's the only definition which would include the chiselled sentences of Pater and your fluid Addisonian English and Oscar's lyrical outbursts."

"Perhaps you are right," Arnold remarked reflectively. "At any rate it would be hard to

put it better in an epigram. 'Style is the way great men talk.' "

Pater and Oscar had a rooted regard for each other and, what was better, a thoroughgoing admiration for each other's talent. Oscar always spoke of Pater's prose as the best in English literature, while Pater admired Wilde's sunny humor and charming talent as a talker from the bottom of his heart and without a spice of envy.

Now in this paper, now in that, Oscar reviewed whatever Pater wrote and usually with intense appreciation. There always seemed to me a tinge of the admiration of pupil for professor in Oscar's exaggerated estimate of Pater's merits. Pater's careful meticulous craftsmanship was so different from Oscar's improvisations that mutual admiration was to be expected; the two talents being almost complementary.

In 1890 Oscar's story, "The Picture of Dorian Gray," appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine*. It was attacked on all hands in England with an insane heat and virulent malevolence. I admired the story and asked Pater, who also liked it, to write an appreciation of it for *The Fortnightly*.

"Dangerous, don't you think? Very dangerous," was his reply. "If I could do Oscar any good I would not mind, but no one can save him. I must think of myself. I will not rush in now; perhaps later I'll say something. Oscar really

is too bold. The forces against him are overwhelming; sooner or later he'll come to grief."

Others had seen the danger even earlier. I remember how Rennell Rodd ten years before sent a copy of his poems, "Songs in the South," to Oscar with this prophetic verse in Italian:

Al tuo martirio cupida e feroce
Questa turba cui parli accorrerà;
Ti vertammo a veder sulla tua croce
Tutti, e nessuno ti compagnerà.

Which may be Englished: "At thy martyrdom this greedy and cruel crowd to whom thou art talking will assemble; they will all run to see thee on the Cross and not one will pity thee."

A year and a half later, in November, 1891, when the storm of slander and opprobrium had blown itself out, Pater wrote of "Dorian Gray" in the *Bookman* and praised it warmly. Even then it might be called a brave act, an extraordinary gesture for Pater, I felt, though I did not yet know what constrained him to such caution.

I met him shortly afterwards.

"Fine work," I exclaimed, "not only as criticism, but because you ventured to praise a work that everyone is still damning and reviling."

He turned his eyes on me.

"It was dangerous," he said, "but a duty, I thought."

The phrase struck me.

Later still, some time after "Marius the Epicurean," that he always regarded as his masterpiece, had been published, we lunched together and talked of Puritanism and its numbing, withering effects on all the rarest flowers of art and literature.

"Why did you bow to it?" I asked. "If you had opposed it stoutly you could have killed it."

"No, no," he cried, getting up and paling at the very thought. "It would have killed me. As it was, I was too bold . . . impossible."

At the time I could not for the life of me understand Pater's dread of public opinion, the unmanly shrinking from any conflict with the dominant forces of the day. I put it all down to English subservience to authority and congratulated myself on being heir to a larger liberty, and subject of a government founded in rebellion, sanctified by successful revolt. I had no idea then that the United States, too, a few years later, would prefer the Tsar Wilson theory of government to that of Jefferson.

About this time I published Pater's essay on Merimée in *The Fortnightly*, and that led to frequent talks about the author of *Carmen*, who had for years been one of my minor idols. Merimée touched life at many points and always as a master; he was an intimate of Napoleon the Third and had a certain influence on French policy for ten or fifteen troubled years, and at the

same time without any apprenticeship showed himself an artist and writer of the best.

Pater shared my enthusiasm and that brought us together, and so gradually, the years helping, we came to be friends and more or less intimate.

One day in Park Lane after lunch I got somehow or other on a new theme with him.

"What have been the chief pleasures in life to you?" I asked.

"Many," he replied simply; "the chief of them connected with art or letters—with beauty in some of its infinite modes. To find a church like that dedicated to the Magdalen at Vezelay; to come across an exquisite phrase in one's reading; a phrase like a flower on the page, perfect in form and color. To be able to lift it up and show it to others—a divine pleasure; or to hear a man talking really brilliantly, like Oscar talks sometimes, as if inspired.

"But perhaps the greatest of all earthly delights is the joy of creation. To write even one sentence absolutely, the garment outlining the thought perfectly; not fitting too closely, it would be ungraceful; yet not too loose, or too ornate it would draw attention to the garment and so appear affected, but just right, revealing more than the naked truth can possibly reveal, with a subtler evocation of beauty, a haunting seduction of rhythm.

"What a delight to have created one perfect

sentence; one phrase that some other lettered reader must pick out and repeat to himself and go about with as one goes about with some rare jewel. The joys of the creative artist are surely the rarest and the highest in the world."

"But has life itself held nothing better than art for you?" I questioned. "Your devotion to books always puzzles me. I find life so much more wonderful than any transcript of it, however exquisite. For instance, you speak of the Venus of Milo with bated breath as of an impeccable, unapproachable loveliness, and in statuary you may be right; but in life I have seen two or three girls' figures out of all comparison more beautiful than any Venus. I know a little cabaret dancer in Monmartre with a figure more perfect than those on the frieze of the Temple to Nike Apteros.

"You were probably the first to see and say that all the spiritual influences of the past are working together to create finer and finer types of beauty. Why not go to life as the source and spring instead of drinking out of some other man's cup?"

"You may be right," Pater replied thoughtfully. "I remember often strolling through the meadows to the river bank at Oxford and watching the students bathing. I can still conjure up the lissom white figures against the green background, still see one youth poised on the bank

with his hands above his head preparing to plunge. There he stood outlined like a Greek god with the sunlight gilding his white limbs as if amorous of their rounded beauty"—then, with a sigh, the return: "Life is infinitely seductive, but books are safer, much safer; our mild cloistered pleasures. . . ."

Somehow I felt that even to remember the vision at Oxford was peculiar, personal; that "mild cloistered pleasures," too, constituted a confession.

Curiously enough, we both enjoyed good food and good wine, and there happened to be in those early nineties a superlative champagne whose like has scarcely been seen since—Perrier Jouet '74. I talked of it once to Pater—I don't know why. I asked him to come and try a magnum of it. (A magnum is a large bottle containing nearly two quarts.) Pater thought a magnum would be too much, but I insisted that the wine was better in the larger bottle.

He agreed to come, and we had a great dinner: zakoushki at first; followed by slices of roast beef (a Scotch sirloin roasted on a spit before a fire), and the invigorating champagne. A magnum hardly satisfied our legitimate thirst, and so we had a bottle of Comet port to follow all cobwebbed without and caked within; yet glowing with generous warmth and a bouquet that from time to time drifted across the sweet

intoxication with lyrical interbreathing, so to speak, of soul-seducing perfume.

Early in the evening we began talking of Shakespeare, the only literary subject at that time on which I felt sure of being Pater's equal. The second or third glass of port transfigured Pater and brought out his self-assertion, the real man.

"Of course," he cried, "Shakespeare was one of the greatest of men, the most articulate creature that ever lived; but think of his scoriæ, my dear fellow, the dull, stupid, windy eulogies of rank and hierarchy, the dreadful scoriæ of Shakespeare."

A little later he returned to the charge.

"In all he has only written a dozen wonderful pages, and if I have written one, as you are kind enough to say, why should I bow down before him?"

"I dislike in my heart all this idolatry of the past; Shakespeare was only one of us—*primus inter pares*—if you like—the first among his peers and equals, but that is all; nothing transcendent or demanding reverence in him—nothing."

When I accompanied him to the door a little later and gave the hansom driver his address, for the fresh night air had helped the fumes of the wine, Pater stopped me as I was helping him into the cab. "Don't forget, my dear fellow," he said, with the gravity peculiar to his state;

"never forget the scoriæ of Shakespeare." And in the cab as he drove away, he was still repeating "the scoriæ, the scoriæ of Shakespeare."

Next day it seemed to me that I had come into touch with the very soul of Pater: a true artist, he could not forgive the greatest of writers his heedlessness, his scoriæ.

If Pater had had a little more courage, I said to myself, a little more vitality and hotter blood, the richer life the wine called forth in him, he would have been another Gautier; a guide to lead Englishmen out of the prison of puritanism; for he hated the senseless restrictions of the outgrown creed, and if he had had greater strength he would have led the revolt.

Pater never married, has never been accused of a love affair with any woman, and he died of a weak heart at fifty-four in spite of regular careful living; these facts explain to me all the man's weakness—his abnormal caution, his hesitancy, his reticence.

Had Pater had a strong heart he might have given us a dozen pages as fine as that on Lady Lisa. As it is, he has written perhaps the finest page in all English prose, and that is enough for any man's measure.

When Arthur Benson's "Life of Pater" was published about 1911, I found that he had made Pater out to have become a devout Christian in the last years of his life. I wrote a passionate

indignant, contemptuous protest in a London paper, *John Bull*. Here are Benson's words:

"We may think of him as one who . . . was deeply penetrated by the perfect beauty and holiness of the Christian ideal, and reposed in trembling faith on 'the bosom of his Father and his God.' "

Pater on the bosom of his Father and his God; Pater who in those last years often called Christianity the beautiful disease, the white leprosy of the spirit! Never was there a more disgraceful perversion of truth, a more flagrant outrage on fact. But Benson didn't mind; he had made his little bleating, and that was all he cared for seemingly, just to win a cheap popularity with a preposterous falsehood. I have done my best here and elsewhere to kill the lie, but it persists and demands stronger measures. The deepest fact in Pater's spiritual make-up was his recognition that it was a good thing to be free of the dreadful doubtings of our childhood.

This world was always "unintelligible" to him. In perhaps his last essay, that on Pascal, he tells how Pascal owing to a nervous shock was continually haunted by the feeling that there was an abyss there, by his side, and he would place a chair or stick on it to chase away the delusion.

Pater himself suffered from the same malady. He writes of Pascal's *Pensées*—"those great fine sayings which seem to betray by their depth of

sound the vast unseen hollow places of nature, of humanity, just beneath one's feet or at one's side."

Pater was always conscious that the abyss was close to him, beneath his feet.

Pater's place in literature, one fancies, is secure. He is not of the Sacred Band of spiritual adventurers who lead forlorn hopes or cross uncharted seas to discover new continents; but he has gone out of the beaten track and found a new headland and taken possession of it and given it his own name. We think of him as we might think of Keats had he written nothing but the Sonnet on Chapman's Homer. Pater had not much to say, but he had one idea, and that important, and he said it superbly and for all time.

There is no vivid, creative genius in his work. His Leonardo even does not live for us, and when we enquire about the Italian's loves and hates, tastes and amusements, we become conscious how little Pater knows of the man. It is by what you take delight in that you discover your real nature; *trahit cuique sua voluptas*.

Pater is more interested in Leonardo's paintings than in his personality; in the incidents of his life than in the growth of his spirit. Yet even in this thin sketch he can find time to speak of a drawing in red chalk—"a face of doubtful sex," and he tells us of the "youthful head which love chooses for his own—the head of a young

man which may well be the likeness of Andrea Salaino, beloved of Leonardo for his curled and waving hair."

I think the last sentence he wrote in this essay is perhaps the completest revelation of himself which Pater could give in a single phrase:

"We forget them (the offices of religion) in speculating how one who had been always so desirous of beauty, but desired it always in such precise and definite forms, as hands or flowers or hair, looked forward now into the vague land, and experienced the last curiosity."

But scattered through his works here and there are sentences almost as significant: striving to reveal himself, he says, in an early essay that he was one in whom the love of beauty had usurped the place of the ethical faculty.

In his essay on Winckelmann Pater is even franker. He knew that Winckelmann never came near the Greek spirit of the best time; like Lessing, he mistook the Laocoon for a masterpiece; but Winckelmann had been notorious for abnormal perversity, and so Pater was curious about him and wrote of him at great length, dwarfing him with a pedestal altogether too lofty. There is a phrase or two in this essay in which Pater unveils his heart to us. He quotes the following passage from Winckelmann:

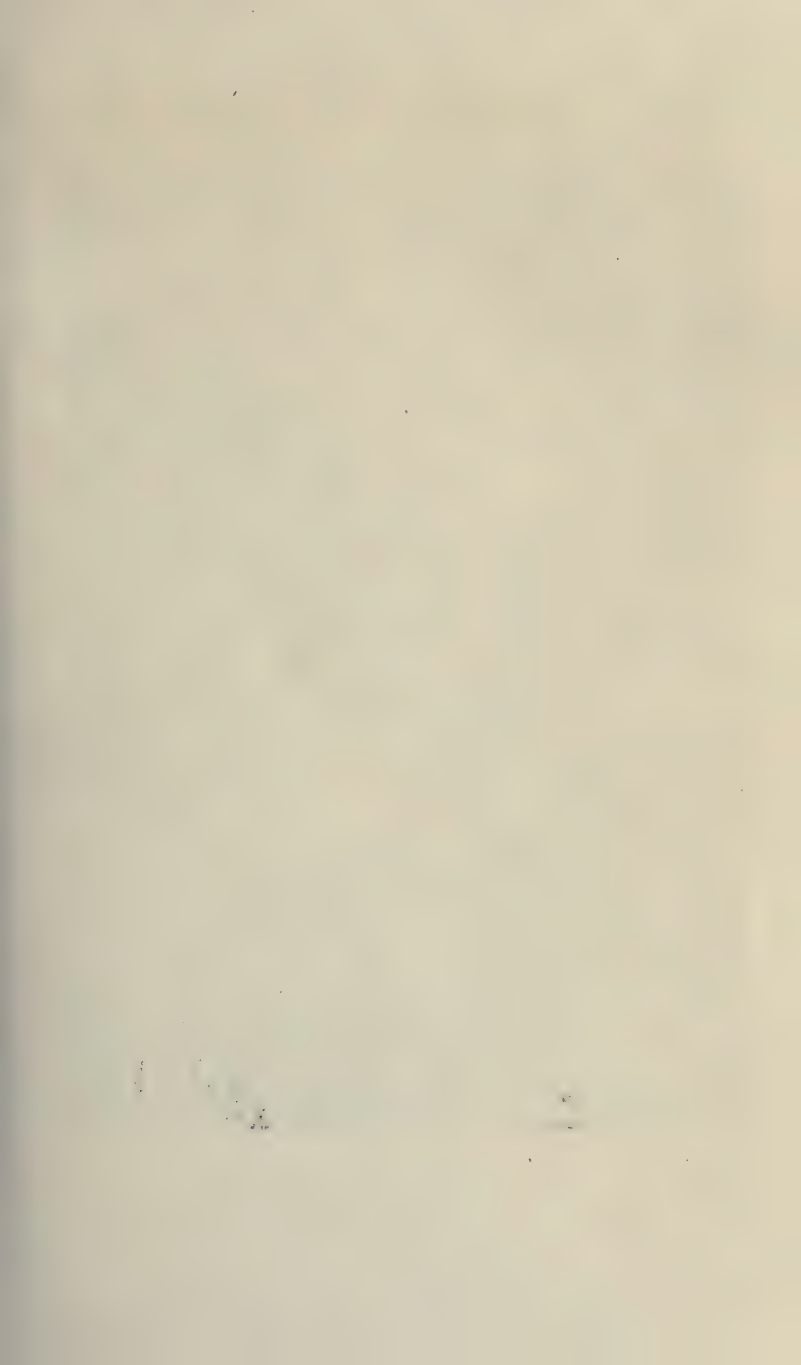
"I have noticed that those who are observant of beauty only in women, and are moved little

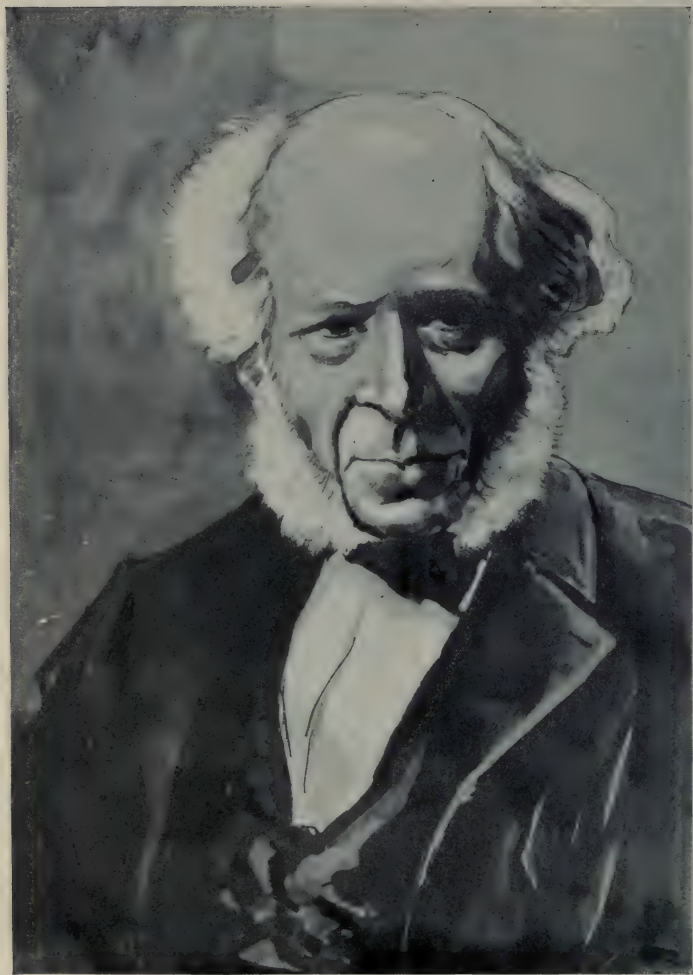
or not at all by the beauty of men, seldom have an impartial, vital, inborn instinct for beauty in art. To such persons the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female."

Now that is exaggerated to untruth, and by its falsity throws a high light on Winckelmann's abnormality. But there is one sentence even more soul-revealing than this. Speaking of attachments between men Pater says:

"Of passion, of physical excitement, they (such attachments) contain only just so much as stimulates the eye to the finest delicacies of colour and form."

In other words, Pater's perversity is mainly mental, or to put it in another way, his physical hold on life was so slight that his desire merely led him to a finer appreciation of the beauties of art—the sanctities, as I have called them, in his own spirit, the sanctities of plastic loveliness.





Herbert Spencer

HERBERT SPENCER: PHILOSOPHER



HEREDITH says in one of his letters, if I remember rightly, that it is not well for any man to be praised too much in his lifetime. The phrase struck me because the truth had been made plain to me through my acquaintance with Herbert Spencer long before.

I must begin by saying that I am not an admirer of so-called "philosophers." The best of them seem to me to have had a glimpse or two of new truth and to have battered out the tiny speck of golden thought over innumerable pages, trying to make an idea or two into a system.

Kant, for example, saw the relativity of space and time, and with that and a hair-splitting difference between reason and understanding composed a huge book, turning even platitudes into puzzles.

Bacon and Schopenhauer are to me the greatest of thinkers, but I prefer Bacon's essays to his more ponderous treatises, and Schopenhauer's critical writings are more valuable to me because more readable than his "World as Will and Appearance." Plato, on the other hand, I can rejoice in with my whole soul; but

he is rather an artist in thought than a thinker—a poet rather than a philosopher.

From the popularity he has acquired in a dozen European countries one feels pretty certain that Mr. Herbert Spencer will be cited among the great philosophers of the future, yet I think his accomplishment small, his contribution to the sum of truth of slight importance.

I remember Huxley praising him one day, and when I objected he told me that Herbert Spencer had done almost as much for the theory of evolution as Darwin himself. I pointed out that the theory was more or less in the air of the time and that all good minds had had an inkling of it. He admitted that there was some truth in my contention, but stuck to his high estimate of Spencer.

I could not agree with him. Coleridge, I argued, had grasped the theory of evolution half a century before Darwin; had even seen in talking of artistic creation that a man grows from the simple to the complex.

Huxley seemed interested, but Spencer was a fetish to him.

In the late eighties I met Herbert Spencer in London rather frequently. The first impression he made on me was of physical weakness and age. He was of middle height or thereabouts; very thin and withered, with a large forehead and head which dwarfed the figure. I thought of

him as a sort of animated tadpole. He seemed pinched and desiccated with age, his expression one of querulous impatience as of a man who has suffered a great deal and become embittered.

In one of our early conversations he told me that he regarded George Eliot as the greatest woman novelist in English. I ventured to say that it would be very hard indeed to oust Jane Austin from that position, and for myself I preferred Emily Bronte to either of them.

He took time to formulate his thought and then replied like an oracle:

"I regard George Eliot not only as the greatest woman novelist, but as the greatest woman that ever lived. A woman of masculine understanding and intelligence, a woman who makes one hope that in time women may come to be the equals of men."

I let the pompous judgment pass, but I would give a dozen George Eliots and Spencers to boot for one Joan D'Arc or Charlotte Corday.

I remember meeting Spencer once in Hyde Park about one o'clock and asking him to lunch.

"I have to be very careful about what I eat," he said; "anything rich disagrees with me."

I assured him that I only liked simple things, too, and so we lunched together.

I was eager to find out one thing which had always puzzled me in his work; he seemed to have a curious blind spot in his intelligence.

I suppose he was the first to treat the nation as a body corporate and to speak of the railroads and roads as the veins and arteries and the electric wires as nerves. He was perhaps the first, too, to state what some of us saw before reading him, that pressure from the outside increases the amount of cohesion among individuals in the body corporate; that where you have great pressure from the outside, as for example in Germany, there will be great cohesion; where you have little outside pressure, as in America and Great Britain, the atoms that compose the social organism will tend to fall apart and there will be a great deal of what is known as individual liberty, and individual self-assertion.

But this law of physics does not go far to explain human society; Spencer was suddenly confronted with the fact that in Britain, when individual liberty was at its height and the state hardly counted, a great movement towards socialism made itself felt. Trades unions sprang up on all hands, vast co-operative societies among workingmen, and private societies, too, in the guise of joint-stock companies.

Herbert Spencer accepted this "voluntary co-operation," as he called it, as a sign of progress, but the nationalization of railroads and other public utilities seemed to him a mistake; all industries, he thought, could be better managed by the individual.

I was very eager to learn whether he saw that this predilection in favor of individualism was a mere result of his having been born and bred in Britain, and so I put it to him that we had entered into a new era and that state socialism was everywhere coming into being.

I was astonished to find that he would not admit this new theory at all; would not even let himself discuss it reasonably; and when I pointed out that the railroads in Germany under state ownership had done better than any privately owned railroads anywhere, and therefore urged that all public utilities should be nationalized, he exclaimed tartly:

"I cannot agree with you at all. It is pure heresy. The individual is always a more competent director of labor than the State."

"But there are departments of industry," I objected, "so great that an individual cannot control them alone. Do you mean also that voluntary co-operation of individuals in joint stock companies is more effective than state ownership?"

"Certainly, certainly," he replied.

I reminded him that Stanley Jevons had once demonstrated that joint stock company management had every possible fault of State management with none of its advantages. I regarded this fact as an established, self-evident truth.

"Self-evident nonsense," he barked, trembling

from head to foot in his excitement. "I do not agree with you at all. In my books I have set forth the truth, and I think established it. Every first-rate man I have ever met has had nothing but praise and admiration for my work, and now to find it called in question is distressing to me and I must not be distressed. Such discussion hurts my heart, makes it beat faster, and I cannot have my heart's action deranged."

He spoke with such peevish irritability, such angry ill-temper, that I could only apologize.

"I am very sorry," I purred; "I had no idea that you would mind discussing anything so long as one tried to be reasonable. I am very sorry. We will talk of something else."

"I am reasonable," he persisted, still in the pettish, vexed voice. "I am reasonable, but I cannot bear contradiction. I am not strong enough to argue. I must go," and away he toddled to the door.

I went downstairs with him out of courtesy, repeating: "I am very sorry; I had no idea; pray forgive me."

At the front-door he stopped, and I thought he had stopped to excuse his puerile bad temper, so I smiled at him deprecatingly, for I really felt sorry that I had annoyed him.

"My health has never been strong," he complained in the same querulous, acrid, thin voice. "I wish I had brought my ear-stoppers with me,

then I need not have heard," he snapped. "I must not forget them in the future. I cannot endure contradiction; it excites me unduly. Good-day to you," and away he went, leaving me not knowing whether to be sorry or to laugh.

Too much adulation, I thought, had turned the old fellow's brain, and he had given up thinking for pontificating.

Whenever I heard the word "philosopher" afterwards, I smiled, thinking of Spencer and his ear-stoppers. Without a healthy body, I said to myself, there is no health in thought or spirit. But had I known more, I should have been more considerate, as I shall show in due course.

A good many years elapsed before I heard of Spencer's death and then of the publication of his "Autobiography." I could not help wondering what sort of a life-story he had had and how he had written it. He had never married, was commonly supposed never to have felt any liking for any woman except George Eliot; on the other hand, he had lived to a great age, had come early to reputation; had been a member of the Athenæum Club for forty years; had met all the English celebrities of his time and must have left most interesting memories.

I sent for the book; two huge volumes of 600 pages each, some 400,000 words at least—a windy hero! And there was no story, so to say, at all; no romance; no youthful love affair; no

mature passion; no exciting or extraordinary happening, except the fact that his American admirers had subscribed some \$7,000 and given it to him, midway in his career, to pay the expenses of publishing his works. Though Spencer's whole life was narrated in great detail and every personal trait—mental, physical and pathological, minutely described, there was no living person in the book: analysis is not creation.

Curiously enough, Carlyle, whom Spencer disliked, comes nearer to living than anyone else mentioned in these dreary pages. Spencer calls him "a queer creature"; characterizes his talk as "little else than a continued tirade against 'the horrible, abominable state of things' . . . epithet piled on epithet, and always the strongest he can find. . . . He is evidently fond of a laugh, and laughs heartily. . . . His wife is intelligent, but quite warped by him."

After saying that he only saw him three or four times in all, Spencer adds: "I found that I must either listen to his absurd dogmas in silence, which it was not my nature to do, or get into fierce argument with him, which ended in our glaring at one another."

And then the summing up, at once curiously characteristic of Spencer and a little unfair:

"Lewes used to say of him that he was a poet without music; and to some, his denunciations have suggested the comparison of him to an old

Hebrew prophet. For both of these characterizations much may be said. By others he has, strange to say, been classed as a philosopher! Considering that he either could not or would not think coherently—never set out from premises and reasoned his way to conclusions, but habitually dealt in intuitions and dogmatic assertions, he lacked the trait which, perhaps more than any other, distinguishes the philosopher properly so called. He lacked also a further trait. Instead of thinking calmly, as the philosopher above all others does, he thought in a passion. It would take much seeking to find one whose intellect was perturbed by emotion in the same degree." Or "guided by emotion" shall we say, Mr. Spencer; for Vauvenargues has taught us that "all great thoughts come from the heart."

It is worth noting as characteristic that Spencer should have come nearer to picturing Carlyle through dislike than George Eliot through liking and sincere admiration. The truth is his dislikes were stronger than his likings, though both were rather tepid, far too tepid ever to have suggested to him an artist's passion or artist phrases. Many a philosopher is made by poor blood and lukewarm feelings: weakness masking as impartiality.

Spencer is unable even to give us a vivid picture of George Eliot. If you read between the lines, however, you will find that, in spite of his

admiration for her mind and character and her discipleship, he could not love her because she was too homely. Apropos of nothing at all, he suddenly writes: "Physical beauty is a *sine qua non* with me; as was once unhappily proved where the intellectual traits and the emotional traits were of the highest."

An incident will show more completely the relationship between the two:

One of my earliest memories of London is of an evening spent in the house of George Eliot.

Was she Mrs. Lewes at the time or Mrs. Cross? I forget; George Eliot always to me: I forget, too, where the house was—somewhere near Regent's Park I think—I can't remember even the name of my introducer; yet the scene itself is unforgettable to me and as vivid as if it had taken place yesterday.

I had a great admiration for the author of "The Mill on the Floss." I was influenced by the over-estimate of the time and believed her to be an unique woman, a great writer, one of the fixed stars in the firmament of literature; consequently I was all worked up with expectancy and hope.

Her appearance shocked me: the long horse face, the pale eyes, the gray, thick skin, the skinny hands; surely, I said to myself, genius never wore so appalling, so commonplace a mask; grotesque ugliness, deformity even would

have been less disappointing to me than this complete absence of anything arrestingly sympathetic or even distinctive.

being a student in Germany (I had been studying in Heidelberg) ; said she ought to have been a man and a German student. Herbert Spencer, who seemed to hold the center of the stage, pursed out his lips and said something about the cruelty and bullying of the German corps-students; George Eliot agreed with him, showing absurd deference, I thought. She said nothing of any weight or novelty and her way of speaking was distinguished only by a touch of formality.

At that time Carlyle was the only other celebrity I had met; but how different. One needed no assurance that he was of the Immortals—a Titan, if ever there was one; he never talked for talking's sake; never used second-hand or ordinary expressions; always spoke significantly, an authentic prophet and seer.

George Eliot turned to Spencer again and again that evening with curious appeal as to an oracle, and the oracle was not mystic as at Delphi, but commonplace, self-satisfied, "school-mastery," I said to myself disdainfully—for evidently he knew nothing really of the life of the German corps-student. He seemed to me learned perhaps, but not wise; I had no rever-

ence whatever for the man.

"What can she see in him?" I kept asking myself in wonder.

All the time I wanted to say something expressive of my contempt for him and my admiration for her; but I was very young and awed a little by their reputations; did not feel master of the situation, so kept quiet on the whole and behaved fairly well, I hope.

That evening showed me that George Eliot was to be congratulated on her escape from Spencer; his companionship developed the rationalistic side of her nature and so harmed her as an artist beyond all telling. If anyone cares to compare "The Scenes from Clerical Life," or even "Adam Bede," or "The Mill on the Floss," with "Daniel Deronda," he will realize the full extent of the artistic injury done her by long and close association with Spencer. She ought to have been brought to feel more and think less; whereas she was encouraged to think and reason and debate instead of living and loving.

Carlyle and Spencer always seemed to me the Plato and the Aristotle of our time, and I have already warned my readers of my preference for the poet or artist, even as steersman of the ship. Carlyle saw incomparably further and deeper than Spencer, saw that "the present horrible, abominable state of things" could not last, that

our modern capitalist, individualistic society was headed straight for Niagara and already in the rapids. It is hardly too much to say that Carlyle predicted the disaster which has lately befallen the nations; his passion came from his understanding of the peril; our Aristotle, on the other hand, had no "premises" to argue from and so came to no such pregnant conclusion.

Yet this "Autobiography" has a pathetic interest for me. In it Spencer tells how he broke down at thirty-five from overwork and never afterwards regained complete health.

At the time of our meeting he was only able to dictate for ten minutes at a time, and the slightest overwork, bodily or mental, or even undue attention, would render sleep impossible, and so he came to use ear-stoppers, which saved him from hearing or feeling too much.

And once the periodicity of sleep broken, his wretched nerves would grow worse and worse, so that he had to lay all work aside at once, seek sleep and ensue it. Mr. Carnegie gave him a piano; like Saul he engaged a David (a girl pianist) to play for him, but the pleasure was too great; he had to deny himself the enjoyment. For forty or fifty years his life was one long struggle with "nerves" and sleeplessness.

But even here he is too much of a philosopher to excite our pity. The artist nature afflicted in this way would have surely done something to

excess; would have spent days in writing or nights in passionate living, and the "nerves" and sleeplessness would have led to that thin line that divides sanity from insanity.

And before that spectre the bravest quails. Shakespeare's anguished cry constricts the heart:

"Make me not mad, kind Heaven, not mad."

That is the torture-chamber of our modern life, which Shakespeare and Dostoievsky alone of men so far, have dared to enter or been able to describe. Maupassant went in, it is true, but never came out again to live as a man among men; we heard his first screams and the squealing idiot laughter, and later his horrible, jibbering mutism, and then mercifully the curtain fell.

But Spencer had not to pay any such price. As soon as he got "quirks" and "the strange feeling in his head," he dropped everything and went after health. He was a philosopher. True, he didn't get health, and so his experience is not much good to us, either as warning-signal or as guide-post. He never even learned that change, continual change of scene, of food, of companionship, is the golden way to lead the neurasthenic back to health; especially, for the artist or writer, change to an open-air life; a riding tour or a motor-car trip across a continent; some change that bathes one all day long in sunshine and affords one ever-varying incidents and light, passing pleasures affords an almost certain cure.

But still Spencer's breakdown and subsequent ill-health made him a pathetic figure to me; filled me indeed with regret, if not remorse, that I had been so discourteous as to annoy him with my rude health and ruder difference of opinion.

A few years later I, too, learned what "nerves" were and knew that a debate rudely pushed on one might have appalling consequences. Our excuse is: we know not what we do.

More than anything we men need constant consideration for others, the most tremulous womanly sensitiveness, and we are all too apt to show hard indifference or that unthinking selfishness which is the brazen shield and front of all human wrong-doing.

But now, before I leave this "Autobiography," let me say that there are good things in it; food for the mind, if not for the soul.

Spencer's ideas on education, his conviction that an elementary knowledge even of our own bodies and minds, of physiology and psychology, would be a thousand times more valuable than a smattering of Latin and Greek; his insistence on teaching the true conduct of life, on having the pitfalls and dangers of living explained even to children, were all very valuable and far ahead of ordinary opinion even in our time.

He knew something about learning how to think. For instance, he notices the fact that in

a hilly country the roads are far below the level of the surrounding land, whereas on a plain the roads are on much the same level as the adjacent fields. To explain this properly is the sort of problem, he says, which should be given to young people to solve; it would help to teach them how to think, and he is right. Such a problem, solved without help, is often the beginning of original thought.

On the other hand, his limitations are astonishing. He cannot see himself from the outside and he is continually deducing inferences from his own experiences which are ridiculously absurd. He finds that the drawbacks of philosophic study, or indeed of any serious literary life, are greater than the advantages. First of all, he says, unless "a man's means are such as enable him not only to live for a long time without returns, but to bear the losses which his books entail on him, he will soon be brought to a stand and subjected to heavy penalties." He adds, naively: "My own history well exemplifies this probability, or rather certainty." And he sums up: "Evidently it was almost a miracle that I did not sink before success was reached." He is always a pessimist; it is only fair to say that for a man of talent the literary life in spite of the precarious reward, which is its chief drawback, is the best and largest life offered to men in our age. It has one paramount advantage

that dwarfs all drawbacks. It confers a sort of universal introduction and enables one without wealth or birth to meet on an equal footing all the most distinguished men of the time.

Even Schopenhauer, the so-called pessimist, knew that "a poet or philosopher should have no fault to find with his age if it only permits him to do his work." And no age can prevent him. Were this the place, it would be easy to show that every age is propitious to genius and high endeavor; like calls to like; great men in every department of life recognize each other and hold it a duty to help the man who reminds them of the dreams of their youth. That Spencer never felt the thrill of recognition and comradeship simply proves that he was not of the lineage of the great, is not to be reckoned with Schopenhauer and Bacon.

Yet, within his limits, he tried to be fair-minded and did excellent work. He writes:

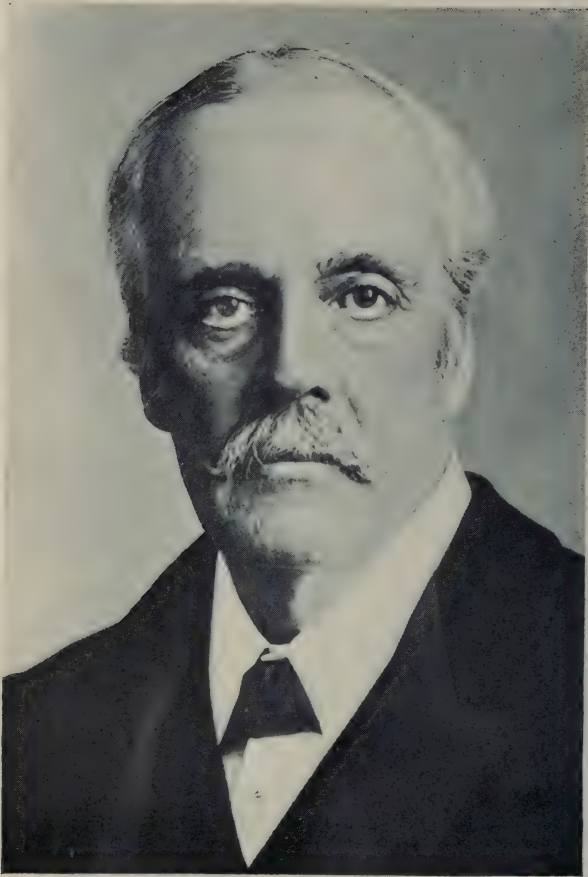
"Even at the present moment, the absolute opposition between the doctrine of forgiveness preached by a hundred thousand European priests, and the actions of European soldiers and colonists who out-do the law of blood-revenge among savages, and massacre a village in retaliation for a single death, shows that two thousand years of Christian culture has changed the primitive barbarian very little. And yet one cannot but conclude that it has had some effect, and may

infer that in its absence things would have been worse. . . .

"Thus I have come more and more to look calmly on forms of religious belief to which I had, in earlier days, a pronounced aversion."

At long last he writes: "I have come to regard religious creeds with a sympathy based on community of need; feeling that dissent from them results from inability to accept the solutions offered, joined with the wish that solutions could be found." He was always just on Tennyson's level:

"Behold, we know not anything,
We can but trust that Good may fall,
At last, far off, at last—to all,
And every Winter change to Spring."



The Right Hon. Arthur J. Balfour

THE RIGHT HON. ARTHUR BALFOUR: AMERICA'S NEWEST GUEST

I leave this pen-portrait as it was written in March 1917, for it derives a certain peculiar interest from the circumstances of the time.

FRANK HARRIS.



HO would have predicted fifteen years ago that America would fight Germany on behalf of the very men who made war on the Boer Republics? Yet here we have Mr. Arthur Balfour on his way to Washington to confer with our President how best to organize victory.

Mr. Balfour has not changed in the meanwhile. He stands now precisely where he stood then; he is the same convinced, contemptuous, courteous antagonist of human equality that he was when he sneered at the Boer farmers and the "dead level of ignorant herdsmen."

In order to avoid any suspicion of prejudice let me prove this before going further, for I have an artist's liking for a man who is true to type, and in this case the type is a fine one.

Wishing to write on the Russian Revolution recently my knowledge, especially of the younger Russian leaders, had to be refurbished and

brought up to date; accordingly I applied to all the Russian leaders and thinkers I could get in touch with in New York City. One of the ablest I met was Leo Trotsky, a Russian Jew and revolutionary, a man who had spent and been spent in the cause of social justice. Trotsky's personality seemed to me charming; a man slightly below middle height, broad, strong, vitally alert; a mop of thick, bristling, rebellious black hair, regular features, broad forehead, the whole face lit up by a pair of glowing bright dark eyes—the eyes of an enthusiast or captain. Trotsky talked to me for hours, sharpening, clarifying my view of this man and that, putting Prince Lyov in his true place as a kindly, honest mediocrity with the same ease and certainty that he classed the enthusiastic young lawyer, Kerensky, or the Socialist, Tscheidze.

His precision of knowledge was matched by his width of vision. He saw clearly that as the revolution went on, the Moderates would be eliminated; that the extreme social revolutionaries would surely come more and more to power, for they would be reinforced by others freed from the prisons of absolutism in South Russia and Siberia. He spoke of the new Russia as one would speak of a beloved woman who had been defiled and tortured, and now having conquered her persecutors was intent on paying her debt to humanity by ideal devotions.

"Holy Russia as leader of the free peoples, Russia as the one country that could make the United States of Europe a possibility,"—was the vision splendid that enthralled him.

"You are going back?" I asked.

"Surely," he cried, "at once; a dozen of us."

"Are you sure of getting to Petrograd?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied. "Who'd stop us?"

"England might stop you," I ventured.

"England!" he exclaimed. "England is with the Allies. England is Russia's friend. Why should England stop us?"

"England is the friend of the Czar," I replied. "England, you know, gave all Milyukov's secrets six months ago to the Czar's Government."

"That's all past," he cried. "England could not stop us now if she would and would not if she could; you forget, we shall be on a neutral ship, really under the Stars and Stripes coming from an American port; as safe as in our beds here."

"Perhaps so," I answered. "I hope you are right, but the English oligarchy is in power: Balfour and his lieutenants, Lords Curzon and Milner; they are not in sympathy with revolutionaries who dream of social equality. They know their real enemies, believe me!"

Trotsky would not even listen; an optimist by nature, he was now winged with hope.

A week later the news came; Leo Trotsky and nine of his fellows had been seized on board a neutral ship in Halifax. In spite of their protests they were thrown into prison and shortly afterwards transferred to a camp for interned German enemies at Amherst in Canada.

His friends protested to our President, but without success. Meanwhile the punishment of these innocent enthusiasts is continued. A word from President Wilson would probably free them; but he remains silent, though, of course, not indifferent. Similar high-handed action on the part of Great Britain brought about the War of 1812, and what we fought then to prevent, we can hardly accept to-day with complacency. The imprisonment of Trotsky and his friends is Arthur Balfour's reply to President Wilson's warm-hearted welcome to the Russian revolutionaries and his wide-flung assurance that America is entering this war to fight for human freedom and for democracy against the injustices of autocratic tyranny.

I see Arthur Balfour entering the White House, smiling and shaking hands with President Wilson, but his right foot is planted on Leo Trotsky's face.

And Leo Trotsky, the outcast Jew and revolu-

tionary, is far more valuable to humanity than Arthur Balfour, who took him from a neutral ship in defiance of law and right and now holds him in prison.

Who is Mr. Arthur Balfour? His outward, as Hamlet would say, is that of a scholar and courtier, captivatingly sympathetic. He is over six feet in height, slight, stooping, with a large head and a prodigiously high forehead framed now with silver hair; the complexion is as fresh as that of a boy; the eyes are blue, patient, without being searching, amiably mirroring pleasant surroundings. He has perfect manners till he is crossed. He was called Miss Arabella at Eton till people found out that he was as autocratic and hard as Nero. A few incidents of his career will paint this typical aristocrat to the life.

I do not need to tell of his youthful vagaries: how he became known as a lieutenant of Lord Randolph Churchill and the supporter of "The Souls," and how he sat at the feet of Lady Elcho. It is enough to say here that "The Souls" was a select *coterie* of the smartest set in London in the eighties, with Lady Brownlow and George Curzon and Margot Tennant (now Mrs. Asquith) as the most fervent adherents.

The first time the outside public got any inkling of Balfour's quality was when he became Chief Secretary for Ireland. For a little while

the Irish hoped great things of him. He was so courteous, so well-read, listened with such sympathetic attention that they thought he was an "easy mark," as American slang has it, but they soon found out that, while listening to all they had to say, he promised nothing and would not yield an iota. They attacked him then in the House and insulted him to his face. He listened to their abuse as he had listened to their praise with the same smiling, gentle courtesy, and went on backing up the oligarchy, ruthlessly evicting tenants, and ruining whole countrysides to the very verge of rebellion.

One word of his about the Irish members deserves to be recorded. Speaking of the way they had treated Chief Secretary Foster—"Buckshot" Foster—he said:

"So long as he was in power they were blackening his character; now that he attacks the Government, they are blackening his boots."

The whole quarrel was typified in the agitation about "O'Brien's Breeches." O'Brien, who had met Mr. Balfour frequently at social functions, and rather liked him, protested against being put in the hideous uniform of the ordinary criminal. He was a political prisoner, he said, and would not wear the badge of shame. He took off the suit and shivered naked in his cell. The next day they clothed him forcibly and told

him that if he took off the prison uniform again he would be punished as any other rebellious prisoner was punished; and finally O'Brien gave in with a bad cold in his head, and Mr. Balfour's victory was hailed with jeers of contempt for the Irish.

But if you think of it, what a paltry victory it was? One asked oneself: Does Mr. Balfour really think he is living in Russia that he can treat political prisoners as common criminals? I heard him once remark that he could see no difference between political prisoners and burglars and murderers except that the political prisoners were of a class to know better and so their guilt was deeper.

People found out that "Miss Arabella" as Irish Secretary was a fighter to the last ditch.

In the beginning of the South African war it will be remembered that the Boers won victory after victory. Their riflemen outshot the British soldiers much as the American riflemen outshot Wellington's veterans at New Orleans. Buller was beaten to a standstill in Natal. The whole of Cape Colony was in a ferment. After Magersfontein and the whipping of Lord Methuen, it looked as if the British might lose South Africa. At the Cabinet meetings Mr. Chamberlain showed himself shaken to the soul. He kept repeating continually that he had been deceived

by the War Office; that the generals had assured him that the war would be finished in three months; that it would be a "walkover."

But Mr. Balfour came to the Cabinet meetings smiling and disinterested as ever and usually half an hour late. When his colleagues doubted he was surprised; when they looked at one another in consternation he shrugged his shoulders. In the darkest days he was just as amusedly detached as he was in the beginning of this war.

He defended the burning to the ground of the farmhouses of non-combatant Boers; he approved the herding of the Boer women and children into the deadly Concentration Camps in the Transvaal where milk was not to be had. When he was taunted by an Irishman with "the Slaughter of the Innocents," he retorted that the gentleman was no doubt justified in defending his own kind—a gibe too bitter to be appreciated by the House, though every one knew that "innocent" is often used in Ireland charitably for "idiot." Many members were shocked to find that urbane, smiling, gentle leader cared little for human life or the conventions of civilized warfare: "No omelet without breaking eggs" is his motto.

Courage Arthur Balfour has of a high quality—all but the highest, indeed—for invincible courage is the martyr's, and is grounded in clear

insight into the Right and uncompromising assertion of it.

His cool selfishness was not without ambition. As soon as he was strong enough he favored an intrigue which forced Lord Salisbury to resign the post of Prime Minister, and the nephew reigned in the uncle's stead. Arthur Balfour thought this a natural, indeed an inevitable, conclusion, but Hugh Cecil, the ablest of Lord Salisbury's sons, has never forgiven the "cuckoo" feat.

Arthur Balfour showed himself at his very strongest in dealing with Mr. Chamberlain after the Boer War. Mr. Chamberlain had been a confirmed Free Trader for thirty years. In the war against the Boers he found out what the colonists were worth and he began to dream of a great Confederation of British States. He saw at once that this necessitated protection of the products of the Empire and free exchange within the Empire. He therefore put this forward in a speech without any reference to Mr. Balfour—a plain challenge for the leadership. A fortnight later Mr. Balfour answered him. Every one expected that he would attack Mr. Chamberlain, or at any rate repudiate his policy, but he merely said that it was a very interesting departure, indeed; as a Conservative he could not but see a good deal in it and he was delighted

that the Colonial Secretary should at length have taken cognizance of those forces which bind men together in society. An anecdote at this time will show the man.

He lives at Whittinghame, his country house in Scotland, with a sister, a very advanced thinker—Susan or Sarah Balfour, I forget which: we will call her Miss Susan.

One night she was expected from London and was rather late. Arthur Balfour waited dinner for her. When she came into the dining-room she was evidently very excited.

"What is the matter, Susan?" said Arthur. "You seem excited."

"For the first time in my life," said Miss Susan, "I have been treated rudely by a workingman."

"Really!" he remarked; "have you ever been treated rudely by gentlemen?"

"By well-dressed wasters, often," retorted the lady, "and now by a workingman."

"How was that?"

"I got into a third-class carriage as usual," said Miss Susan, "and there was a workingman in it who spat on the floor. When I reproved him and told him he ought to be ashamed of himself and go in a cattle-truck if he wanted to be dirty, he answered that I ought to be ashamed of myself; I ought to go in a first-class carriage, where I belonged, and leave workingmen who

had done a day's work to take their rest quietly in the train without being bothered by super-fine manners.

"I told him his spitting was disgusting, more like a pig than a man; I said if he did it again I would give him in charge. Don't you think I was right?"

"I don't really know," said Arthur Balfour. "The 'pig' and 'cattle-truck' epithets were no doubt effective, but rather in the manner of the Colonial Secretary, don't you think?"

As Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Commons Arthur Balfour was a failure; came, indeed, to complete grief, and this in spite of English snobbery and his own high qualities. He grew to be too autocratic and asserted a more than Popish infallibility. He fell of his own strength. Not only was he an aristocrat by birth and natural leader of the oligarchy, but he was a man of the widest reading and culture—a Scotch metaphysician who had taught himself to think out the non-utilitarian problems of Why? Whence? and Whither? to the verge of the Unknown. On a ceremonial occasion he could make a speech in the House which put Mr. Asquith's best work in a secondary place. He alone could rise to the height of every argument, and yet as a leader of the House he failed, even in England, and not of weakness but of autocratic egotism.

He announced that any one who ventured to criticize him or dissent from his policy had better leave the party, for he assuredly would not help him to office. He would have no lieutenant that was not a servant and servile.

Winston Churchill was the first to take up the glove. He criticized Balfour in the House and defied him; then left the party and became a leader of the Liberals. I well remember the night in the House when he made his great speech and how Arthur Balfour got up in the middle of it and walked out as if he was unconcerned. Many members resented the contemptuous act. Lord Hugh Cecil, his own first cousin, the ablest Conservative in the House of Commons—the only one in my time of undoubted genius—was snubbed by Balfour and kept out of sight. When he lost his seat in the House, though it was the custom and would have been a mere courtesy to have got him another, Balfour left him out in the cold. His conduct of affairs was so autocratic that at length even the landed squirearchy and the rich manufacturers deserted Lord Salisbury's nephew for the unregarded colonist, Bonar Law, and Bonar Law was made master in his stead.

Mr. Balfour seemed to care as little for the defeat as for success. He did not attack the Government which had taken his place; he pursued the even tenor of his way, unperturbed. He

wrote a "Defense of Philosophic Doubt" and made stately speeches in the House at long intervals. Like Shakespeare's Cæsar,

"He let determined things to Destiny,
Hold unbewailed their way."

It is possible that if Arthur Balfour had had to work for a living he might have risen to original thought. His "Foundations of Belief" is really interesting; it is Bergson adapted rather than translated into English by one who had already coquetted in thought with the idea of creative evolution. Arthur Balfour is, as Heine says, on the topmost level of the thought of his time. He has reached the conviction that his political creed is sustained and buttressed by the faith and practice of a thousand generations of men.

"Who survive in men's memories?" he will ask—"the statesmen and generals, the writers and artists, the greatest of the sons of men. Those are the people whom I consider and whom I like. The unnumbered millions who never attain anything I can afford to forget,—as their fellow-men forget them and as probably God forgets them also. I have no interest in the unwashed herd."

He forgets that the only distinguished people he takes any heed of are those in his own class and set; had he rubbed shoulders more with the crowd he would have been a bigger man.

He was once asked in the House of Commons about something that was in all the daily papers. He professed complete ignorance on the subject.

"But it has been in all the daily papers," his questioner remarked.

"Very possibly," replied Mr. Balfour. "I never read the daily papers."

Members of the House looked at each other and smiled, but it was not a pose; it was the truth.

Arthur Balfour is always perfectly self-possessed, completely at ease. I remember seeing him one night in a crowd going up the broad staircase of Sutherland House. He bowed as he came up to this and that person standing in the gallery above him with the charming good nature of a pleased schoolboy. He did not see that he was keeping just in front of the Prince of Wales and spoiling the Prince's entrance. When he got to the top of the stairs his hostess greeted him, adding quickly: "Pardon me, Mr. Balfour, but the Prince is just behind you."

Balfour turned round, bowed to the Prince and said smiling happily:

"Oh! Sir, it simply shows that there is no divination in this clay of mine or I should have felt a prickling in my back and given you the pride of place."

It was perfectly said with a charming smile as of equal to equal, but with subtle recognition of the other's superior rank.

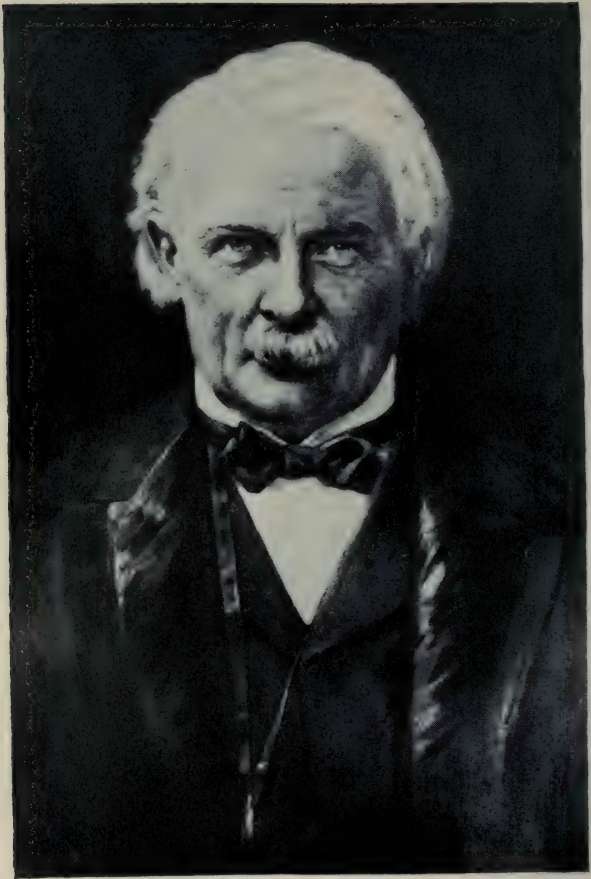
How will Mr. Balfour meet President Wilson? He is some ten years older, ten well-filled years. I am afraid he will be his superior in many qualities; a better dialectician, a greater master of English; one who has practised speaking for over forty years and has held his own in debate again and again in Throne room and Senate against all comers; he won his spurs in the Berlin Conference in 1878.

A Lincoln would see through him and round him by virtue of a larger humanity and a passionate resolve to serve his fellow-men; a Roosevelt even would sense his deficiencies; though he might not be able to analyze them, but Mr. Wilson is of his own sort, a scholar and amateur of life with the deficiencies of the bookish. Yet Mr. Wilson has one eminent superiority; he is an American and should be gifted with a deeper moral conscience; he could hardly have coerced Ireland or enslaved Egypt; he, too, must feel that Mr. Balfour is essentially hollow and that gives me hope. I see Mr. Balfour bowing to Mr. Wilson, smiling because he thinks he has captivated him with his charm and courtesy; but he has still his foot on the face of Leo Trotsky.

It is to be hoped that our President with his

own suavest courtesy will point out this fact to Mr. Balfour and invite him in the interests of humanity to take more care for the future where he puts his foot.

With many thanks,
Pray believe me
Yours very truly
Ans James Balfour
Frank Harris Esq.



The Right Hon. David Lloyd George

MR. LLOYD GEORGE AND THE FUTURE



UNLIKE most of his rivals in British politics, Mr. Lloyd George came from the people; he has a touch of genius in him too, and is a Welshman to boot. Even without genius the Welsh Celt is often interesting; he is generally articulate and he's nearly always apt to reason with his emotions and calculate with his passions to the bewilderment of the Saxon. It ought to be easy for me as a Welsh Celt to give a vivid and interesting word-portrait of Mr. Lloyd George and yet it's peculiarly difficult. I find it hard to treat him sympathetically because, although our aims in politics have often been alike, the means we would employ to compass them, are wholly dissimilar. The bitterest disagreements, it appears, are always between brethren.

From the crown of his head to the sole of his feet David Lloyd George is a typical Welsh Celt; he is short, broad, thick-set, with the heavy body and ungraceful short legs of the Cymri. His face is more regular than most Celtic faces and is nevertheless exceedingly mobile and vivid

—expressive of every shade of feeling or resolution. His voice, too, like many Welsh voices, is very strong, resonant and musical, and when master of his feelings, as he occasionally is, he is perhaps the greatest orator in Great Britain, or it would be truer to say the only orator of the first rank, with the exception of Lord Hugh Cecil or Ramsay MacDonald.

David Lloyd George has come from the lower half of the social ladder: he is the son of a teacher in a Unitarian school at Liverpool and accordingly from boyhood his deepest feelings have been at the service of politics rather than of religion. His father died when he was an infant; but the apparent misfortune was a blessing in disguise. He was taken to Wales to live with an uncle, David Lloyd, a shoemaker, and there the enthusiastic and gifted lad sucked in a complete command of Welsh as a mother-tongue. He had the usual Church-School training and learned English as a schoolboy; as a youth, he was placed in a solicitor's office, and was admitted to the practice of law in 1884, when just twenty-one.

He has told himself how he visited the House of Commons at eighteen and looked upon it as William the Conqueror looked upon England during his visit to Edward the Confessor, as his future "domain." At twenty he wrote in his diary that his career in the House depended on

his own "pluck and energy." He had hardly reached a decent living as a solicitor when he stood for Parliament and, thanks chiefly to his eloquence in Welsh, was elected for Carnarvon in 1890. When only twenty-seven years of age he had thus got his foot on the first rung of the political ladder. In the next ten years he won a fair practice as a solicitor, made himself conversant with the forms and spirit of the House of Commons and gradually became known to the better heads, as a personality, if not yet as a power.

For a good part of this apprentice period Tom Ellis was the Whip of the Liberal party: he and Lloyd George had grown up together and Tom Ellis was a man of extraordinary quality. He had the best manners I've ever seen in my life, better even, because gentler, more sympathetic and more quickly responsive than Mr. Thomas Bayard's who, as American Ambassador, became famous during his short stay in London for charming human courtesy to all men alike, whether of palace or cottage. In Tom Ellis, too, the manners were only the outward visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace. He had the immediate intuitive comprehension of genius which genius alone gives, and long before Lloyd George was known to the House Tom Ellis had marked him out for high place: "a great fighting man," he used to call

him, "a born orator and leader filled with passionate emotions; you'll see, he'll go far. At any rate, he's much the ablest politician that has yet come out of Wales."

Lloyd George's first parliamentary exploit was to revolt against the Liberal Government in 1894 on the question of disestablishing the Church in Wales. He led several malcontents such as Francis Edwards, Herbert Lewis (now the Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Lewis) and D. H. Thomas (afterwards Lord Rhondda) on a raging electoral campaign against Tom Ellis and his Welsh majority of 40 and won notoriety by his daring if nothing more.

It was the South African War in 1900 which gave Lloyd George his opportunity: for him it came in the nick of time. As a Welshman he believed in small nationalities and their claims to fair treatment by their stronger neighbors. All his sympathies were with the Boers and from the beginning he championed their cause in the House. This brought him at once into conflict with the vast majority of members, who are always militant imperialists and particularly with Mr. Chamberlain, a dominant personality and the most redoubtable debater at that time in the Commons. To the astonishment of the House, the "little Welsh attorney," as he was called, held his own in the cut-and-thrust of debate, and the extreme Radical wing rallied

with delight to his support. In vain they were nicknamed Pro-Boers, and shouted down in the House while their motives were impugned and their manners ridiculed in the capitalist press.

It is almost as difficult in England as in America to express any opinion which differs from that of the governing class, and in time of war the difficulty is intensified. For years, even after he had demonstrated his ability, Lloyd George was treated as a pariah in the House; but gradually, events aiding, he came more and more to the front till at length a decisive victory established his position as a leader and entitled him to consideration.

Towards the end of the Boer War the Intelligence Department of the Army under Lord Kitchener issued weekly bulletins announcing the capture of, let us say, 1,200 Boers and the seizing of 2,000 rifles. In May, Lloyd George asked the War Office how many Boers were supposed to be in the field. The answer was between 15,000 and 20,000. In October he brought the matter before the House and moved that peace be declared, for by a sum of simple addition it was evident that Lord Kitchener having captured—according to his own weekly reports, from May to October, more than 30,000 Boers—he was now fighting a minus number of imaginary enemies at the cost of a couple of millions sterling a week. The effect of this ironical

statement in the House was so extraordinary that the majority yelled with rage and even Mr. Chamberlain forgot himself utterly and called out "Cad!" across the floor to his opponent. Lloyd George won the sympathies even of the majority by meeting the insult with a bow: "No one," he said, smiling, "could be a better judge of that epithet than the Right Honorable gentleman," a double-edged impromptu which astonished even his friends. Lloyd George was clearly a first-rate fighting man and the House cheered him warmly for the first time. From that day on he had ministerial rank.

When the Liberal party came into power Lloyd George entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. He was regarded by the Radicals and Labor Members as the only democratic Minister and his first speeches confirmed his reputation. Throughout the country he began to be loved as Mr. Gladstone had been loved by virtue of a certain religious sentiment, though his emotional appeals were usually taken for claptrap by the House. Besides, he was disliked in the Commons as a resolute opponent of the Imperialistic spirit, which is always the governing impulse in England. He was consistent, however; just as he had attacked the policy of the strong out of sympathy with the weak nationalities, so now when in power he showed constructive statesmanship by support-

ing the cause of the many poor in Great Britain against the rich oligarchy. Every speech was a sort of *Magna Charta* to the proletariat and marked a stage in the rising flood of his popularity. To his credit it must be noted that he still remained easy of approach, without touch of affectation or pomposity; indeed he was usually ingratiating as well as earnest and sincere.

As Chancellor of the Exchequer he tried by various measures to lay the burden of taxation on the rich and ease the shoulders of the poor. His latest and most successful measure was borrowed from Germany—the Compulsory Insurance Act by which employers are compelled to contribute to the Accident and Insurance fund intended to succor their employees. Many people objected to this as a vexatious interference with private liberty, and there can be no doubt that “the Stamp-licking Act,” as it was called, was heartily disliked by the richer classes, while numbers of the poor were too thoughtless and ill-taught to appreciate its benefits. Still Lloyd George was upheld by the small body of educated men who knew that the inequality of conditions in Great Britain had long passed the disease zone and reached the danger mark. Would he go on and lead the democracy into the Promised Land, or would he sell out to the oligarchy? That was the question.

It is curious and characteristic that demo-

cratic legislation in England, which is supposed to be a free country, follows timidly in the footsteps of autocratic Germany and does not dare to imitate France. The land in France is fairly parceled out among millions of small proprietors. There is no approach to ideal justice in the division, but there is a good deal of practical justice.

In England, on the other hand, some five hundred landlords own about half the land of the country. The first and most imperative social reform would be to give the land back to the people from whom it was in great part stolen within the last century and a half; but no British statesman has yet dared to face the storm which such a proposal would call forth. Eight or nine years ago it looked as if Lloyd George meant to take the oligarchic bull by the horns: he set on foot an inquiry into the possession of land in England and its results: at once he was viciously attacked; his agents and methods derided; he himself personally insulted by this duke and that lord. Still he held firm. His commission was appointed; two thousand investigators put to work.

Then as a bolt from the blue came the world-war. Would it strengthen Lloyd George and his "communistic projects" or would it weaken them? What happened could have been foretold. War always strengthens hierarchies and

gifted individuals. Lloyd George is to-day stronger than ever; but his land-legislation is shelved, and it seems doubtful even whether the great war minister will inaugurate the democratic reforms he has again and again promised. Let us take a look at the man in his habit as he lives before we attempt to forecast his future.

First of all he has some excellent virtues. He is simple in his tastes and in his surroundings. He likes good food and is fond of toothsome dainties with his tea, but he rarely touches wine though he is not a teetotaller. Even on long and cold motor tours he always asks for hot coffee, and he drinks it with meat or game indifferently—a dreadful trial to most digestions, though apparently not even noticed by his stomach.

Mr. Lloyd George has no amusements except an occasional game of golf; his chief self-indulgence is a good cigar. In these later years he has grown somewhat stout, partly because he has not been able to find the time for golf that he used to give to it. His love of everything Welsh is seen in his home surroundings. You rarely find any domestic in his household except Welsh girls, with whom he always speaks in Welsh.

Society bores him. If he wants an enjoyable evening he gathers his friends about him, and he can spend an evening listening even more willingly than talking. He loves all shows es-

pecially the theatre and the music-hall. If he had time he would visit them often. They nourish his dramatic and æsthetic instincts which were repressed in boyhood.

Sir Herbert Tree once asked him to a first night and to supper afterwards in the Dome. As he walked home with his wife in the full light of a summer morning through St. James's Park to Downing Street, he said to her: "Would you and I have ever thought ten years ago that we would have gone to a theatrical supper and enjoyed it?"

There is nothing too absurd for him in music-hall songs; sometimes when he is in especially good spirits he sings snatches of them with great enjoyment; usually he has learned them from one of his daughters.

The most marked and characteristic feature of his private life is his intense family affection. No villager in Wales could show a simpler family setting than that of Mr. Lloyd George. One evening a journalistic friend came into the house and asked where was the "Hyena"—the name applied to him by a German journal after his famous "knock out" interview. He found the "hyena" seated on a sofa with an arm around the waist of each of his two daughters. When one of his daughters died, his friends still recall with dread the agony of his grief; one says that in spite of his natural gaiety he has never looked

quite cheerfully at life since. The greater softness of temper, the unusual patience, something mystic in his spiritual outlook are perhaps some of the consequences of that blow.

He cares for little in life but politics. He keeps all his strength for his career. This is one of the reasons for what would otherwise appear to be inconsiderate carelessness. He is inundated with letters; he answers only a few of them; and so gets into trouble; often is so absorbed in big things that he will not allow himself to fritter away time on unessentials. Yet he can be soft and yielding up to a point.

There is never anything "brutal"—an epithet applied to him by another German paper recently—in either his words or his demeanor. He often allows himself to be bored and put out rather than get rid of somebody who is in the way, but he will not allow himself to be bothered or diverted from his work by a great lady or by the great mob; life is too short and too full of big things to be wasted.

One of his extraordinary tastes is his passionate love of a sermon. He often says that he prefers a good sermon to a good play. He quotes by the yard rhetorical passages from the extensive pulpit literature of his country. Over and over again, he will roll out the great phrases of a preacher denouncing the rich who grind the faces of the poor, "The wood is drying in the

sun that will make their coffins." He is a great reader; and though he hesitates to speak French he knows French pretty well and reads a good French novel with pleasure and some facility.

Take him all in all, he has more than the usual complexity of the Celtic character. He is often unwilling to begin work, but once he begins he finds it difficult ever to give it up. He can work immensely, though he gets very tired; but then he can sleep anywhere and at any time: often on Saturday or Sunday afternoons he sleeps on a couple of chairs. He is ordinarily cheerful and grows more even tempered with the years, but he has moments of depression, and in his youth he was said to be haunted by the vision of early death, like that of his father.

He is very soft; though at times he can be very hard. At once the most pliant and the most obstinate of men; he can be broad of vision, and under the strong and tenacious will he can put his mind in blinkers; he has sometimes weird insight as of a genius; he seldom looks back; and is always confident of the future.

Though he was not brought up in Celtic-Christian superstitions; the atmosphere of his mind is semi-religious, semi-fatalistic which strikes one as strange in a man whose outlook is so matter of fact. He has always a saving sense of the transience of human things which

stands between him and an excessive enjoyment of the triumphs of life.

The question of questions now is what is to be hoped from Mr. Lloyd George as a social reformer. He has not studied social questions deeply, knows little or nothing of the disadvantages from an industrial point of view of our present competitive or grab-as-grab-can society; but his sympathies are democratic and he understands the disabilities of poverty. Had he listened to Socialistic or Fabian orators, instead of sermons, I should be more hopeful of him.

I do not know for certain how far Mr. Lloyd George's zeal for human equality has been side-tracked; but connection with the Marconi scandal would of itself be sufficient to explain his failure to deal drastically with the economic problems of his country.

Nobody believes that Lloyd George speculated in Marconi shares from the usual sordid motives; he is notoriously careless about money; as Chancellor of the Exchequer he used to say laughingly that it was his wife who took care of his purse and the only result of Ministerial rank to him is the possession of the modest house at Criccieth which may have cost \$6,000 or \$8,000. There can be no doubt that he was persuaded to "have a flutter" in Marconi shares by Sir Rufus Isaacs, then the Attorney-General, but the gamble which led Sir Rufus Isaacs

directly to a peerage and the position of Lord Chief Justice weakened Lloyd George a good deal as a reformer. How could he attack the landlords when his own hands were not immaculate?

We can afford to be frank in this matter. It was said very often that Mr. Lloyd George worked with Lord Northcliffe because Lord Northcliffe knew the details of the Marconi business and Mr. Lloyd George dared not break with him. But now to the confusion of the scandal-mongers Mr. Lloyd George has broken with Lord Northcliffe and no disclosures have been made because there was nothing to disclose. I dislike more than I can say the common habit of explaining the inconsistencies of public men by some low personal motive. It is Mr. Lloyd George's knowledge I doubt, not his honesty. Besides, if England waits for a reformer till she gets an angel, she'll wait a long time.

Lloyd George has a touch of genius in him and with genius go a good many amiable human weaknesses; but the genius who wins out as a benefactor to humanity is the man who turns his stumblings into stepping stones.

What then is his position at the moment. Without probing too curiously, facts speak for themselves.

About the time when the Coalition Govern-

ment was formed and the Conservative leaders, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Arthur Balfour and Sir Edward Carson, joined the Liberal Ministry in the Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George's Land Commission was dissolved and his 1,700 or more paid investigators discharged. Since then no one of position in England has spoken of the evils of landlordism or the millennium of land nationalization. Social reforms were summarily shelved and Lloyd George did not even protest.

He was appointed Minister of War, and the job of providing munitions which Kitchener had hopelessly bungled, he accomplished; he took over hundreds of private factories and nationalized them; he socialized a vast industry and extended it beyond precedent while turning over surplus profits to the Treasury; he proved in England what in Germany has been proved again and again, that a nationalized industry could beat any private industry both in productive power and cheapness. Lloyd George did even more than this. He advocated conscription and turned Lord Kitchener's paper army into a real national army; he animated the whole people with his spirit and enormously increased the strength of Great Britain as a fighting force.

Think of his speech at Bangor in the summer of 1916, when he criticized severely the lack of high spirit in Great Britain. "We have not yet

given up drink," he cried, "as it has been given up in France and Russia. . . . We laugh at things in Germany," he went on, "which should terrify us. Look at the way they make bread out of potatoes. I fear that spirit of cheerful self-sacrifice more than I do Field Marshal von Hindenburg's strategy, efficient though it may be." He then proceeded to criticize the shipwrights on the Clyde for striking for higher wages at such a crisis and sneered at the farthing an hour they were holding out for. He would have done better had he blamed the rich employers whose profits had more than doubled in the year, while their "hands" have had no share in the wealth they created. Twenty years ago the hard meanness of the rich would have furnished Lloyd George with his text, and not the pitiful hopes of the poor. Still, the personal force and drive of the man grow steadily in importance.

One question imposes itself? Why on earth did he allow his Land Commission to be dissolved without any protest? Perhaps he was not strong enough then to fight the oligarchy. But why did he allow his settlement of the Irish difficulty, after it had been accepted by all concerned, to be thrown aside by Lord Lansdowne?

Think of it; he was called upon by Mr. Asquith to leave his munition-providing and settle

the Home Rule question that had flamed into rebellion and turned the fairest part of Dublin into a heap of burning ruins.

At once he accepted the task that had baffled English statesmanship for fifty years. He brought Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson into one room and within a few days drew them to an agreement and set forth his settlement, which was accepted by Mr. Asquith and the Coalition Government. But in a week or so the oligarchy had got over its scare; the soldiers had mastered the rebels; the revolt, the Lords thought, was at an end. At once Lord Lansdowne coolly got up in the House of Lords, declared that Mr. Lloyd George's settlement was temporary and would have to be conducted by Dublin Castle as in the past. Mr. Redmond protested and appealed to Mr. Asquith. Mr. Asquith, who was, so to speak, the electric clock which registered the dynamic energies of the moment, bowed his head to Lord Lansdowne and murmured, "We'll see; we'll see!" To every one's astonishment, Lord Lansdowne won without a struggle and combative Lloyd George took the astounding rebuff lying down.

I am afraid it looks as if he had given up the cause of moral and social reform and accepted the present aristocratic constitution of English society. During the war he was always against the workingmen: he condemned the shipwrights

for striking as he had condemned the Welsh miners for striking.

I must again and again reiterate it, for it is one of the highest moral lessons of the war: England will not win anything worth having unless she gets rid of her effete oligarchy, and by some great act of social justice, such as giving the land back to the people of England, reanimates the downtrodden millions of her wage-slaves. If England had treated her poorer classes as well as Germany has treated her workmen, Lloyd George would not have had to complain of their apathy and want of spirit. Men fight for life in measure as life is worth having. One-third of the population of Great Britain is always on the verge of starvation. Why should the starving poor fight for the country which has condemned them to suffering and misery?

Give them hope of independence and comfort and you won't have to complain of their want of spirit. Give them the land which is theirs and the railroads and the mines and the manhood suffrage which should be theirs and you will have again the spirit of the French *sans culottes*, who without training and almost without equipment beat the Germans at Valmy and thus laid, as Goethe saw, the foundations of the modern world.

The name of Lloyd George is often coupled with that of Lincoln.

The comparison is not far-fetched.

Both men sprang from the people; both gave repeated proofs of democratic sympathy; both got their opportunity in war. And in spite of the reverence we all feel for Lincoln, it must be admitted that Lloyd George's achievements in the first years of the war were at least equal to Lincoln's in the same time. He organized labor with the most extraordinary success and in the Home Rule settlement showed rarer quality still—a power of sympathy and comprehension that marks him as a great Reconciler.

Lincoln's greatness was shown in his deep humanity; he always preferred pardon to punishment and lately Colonel Watterson, of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, has proved that even in the last six months of the war, when the South was beaten and on the verge of collapse, Lincoln offered the Confederates the most extraordinarily generous terms; he went so far as to offer to pay the full price for the slaves he had already freed; "*he did not want victory,*" he said, "*much less a triumph;* but an abiding and healing peace."

Lloyd George took almost the same stand; but in the peace negotiations he has forgotten his humanity.

Lloyd George stands at the parting of the ways; his conduct of the war has given him

power such as no one has had in England since Chatham. How will he use it?

From his management of the recent election it looks as if he would go on in the old, bad adroit way. He told the electors and the newly enfranchised millions of women that he would make Germany pay for the war, and the electorate believed his impudent, ridiculous assurance. The grateful electors said practically what they have always said in like case: "We trust you and will wait." But he must have known that he was promising the impossible: Germany is utterly unable, even if she were willing, to pay for the war. In order to retrieve his position and rebuild his dwindling popularity he promised to have the Kaiser tried in London. But such clap-trap could not win even the English masses: they are above such petty malignity. He promised, then, disarmament, the end of conscription, the use of the land for the soldiers, the nationalization of the railways—all these promises are still unfulfilled, indeed their realization in the near future manifestly depends rather on the spirit of the workingman than the reforming zeal of the politician.

Still at any moment Lloyd George's early religious training may come to his aid; or some touch of imagination.

If Lloyd George will not be the savior of the people, nevertheless they shall find salvation.

Sooner or later a social revolution will do for England what her politicians refuse to do. But Lloyd George has an unique opportunity; he partly sees it; will he at length realize it and set his hand to the work? If he will nationalize the English land and English railroads and mines, he will rank in the future with Lincoln. If not, he, too, will be like Mr. Chamberlain—"a lost leader" with absurd promises to show that he could not read the signs of the times.

VISCOUNT GREY



MET Viscount Grey for the first time some thirty years ago at a dinner given by Sir Charles Dilke, who had been Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and had made his reputation there as very painstaking, easy of approach, and fair-minded.

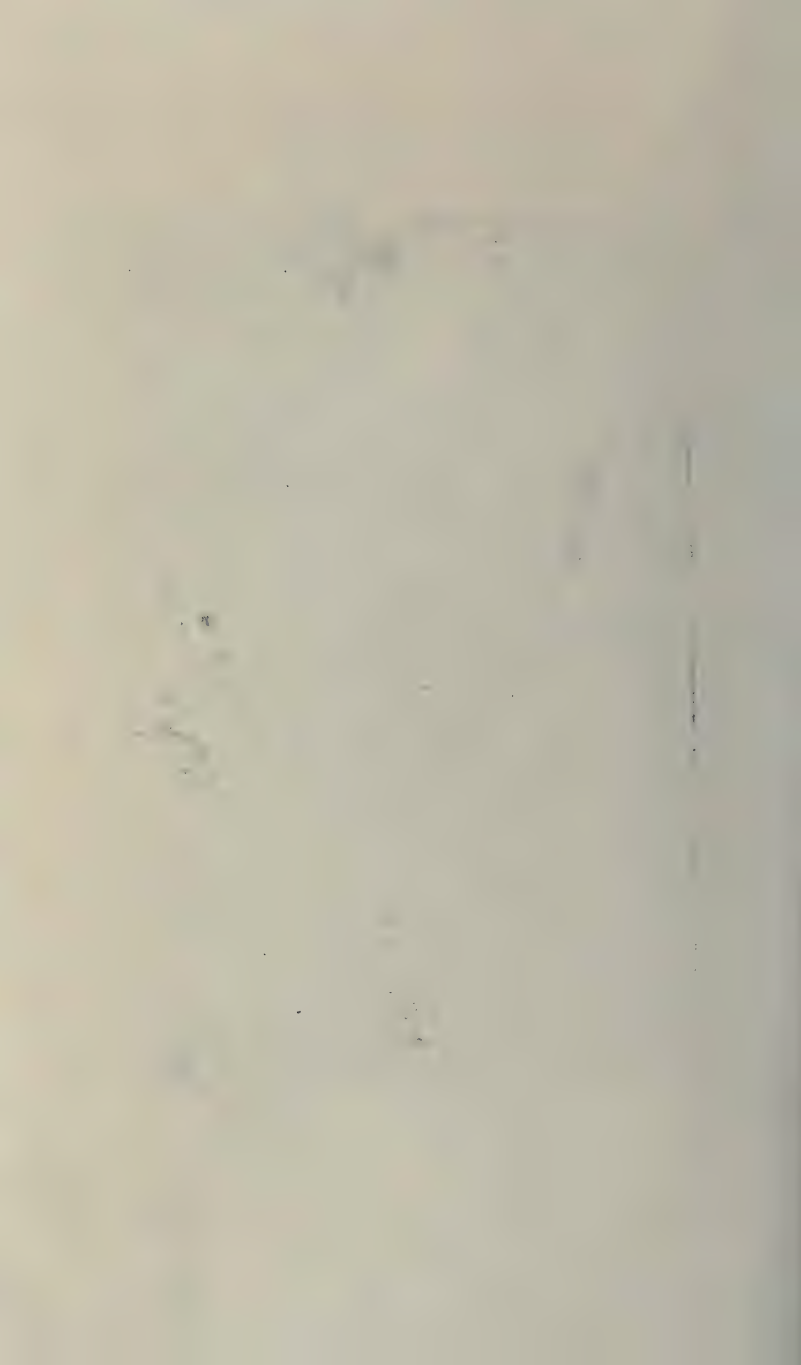
When I shook hands with my host on entering the drawing room he drew me aside.

"Edward Grey is dining with us to-night," he said. "You ought to know him; he's extraordinary and will go a long way. I'm curious to see what you'll think of him."

A little later, he took me across to the fireplace and introduced me to Grey, who was standing just beside the vivid, speaking miniature portrait of Keats, which had been given to Dilke's grandfather by the poet himself. Grey's quiet was the first thing that struck me, and the carved, strong features and deep, earnest eyes. He said nothing particular, did not seem to regard it as a duty to talk, yet was perfectly courteous. He was tall, five feet ten, I should guess, but looked taller because he was very thin. At first one didn't notice that his shoulders were broad and his leanness the hard fitness of the trained athlete. All Grey's qualities come to



Right Hon. Viscount Grey



you slowly; reveal themselves one after the other, in intimacy; yet he is not shy nor has he the conventional pose of reticence as "good form": reserve is natural to him.

Though a Member of Parliament who had not yet succeeded, he did not appear anxious to impress the journalist, not desirous even to show his powers, and yet somehow or other he was impressive—called forth curiosity. His face was of the type known as Roman; the bird of prey type, not thin, but chiseled like a cameo; high-beaked nose, iron-firm jaw, broad forehead; strength, the characteristic of it all—strength and self-mastery and assured poise—a puzzling fellow: what was his secret?

At dinner he never led the talk, never tried to; but when spoken to replied quietly, without emphasis; he brought forth, I remember, one or two platitudes which, though well worn, seemed to have some weight when he used them. He possesses eminently the characteristic which Emerson gives the English gentleman: "He says less than he means, and never more." Grey's tone was pitched low to unobtrusiveness.

My hasty judgment stands on record against me. I wrote of him next day: "There have been several generations of Greys but Sir Edward Grey, the M. P., though the youngest of the lot, is really the oldest; he must have been born old; dried up in premature prudence."

I'm not ashamed of this offhand judgment, for Grey is extraordinarily prudent and his reserve was misinterpreted by other observers. Harold Frederic, perhaps the ablest journalist the United States ever sent to London, formed much the same opinion as I did. After dinner we came together with Dilke for a final powwow before separating, and Frederic's verdict was: "Grey says nothing because he has nothing to say."

English social life is a good deal less talkative than French or American life, and we had both met dozens of Englishmen who were very silent because they were inarticulate or empty-headed, and so we were ready to let prejudice judge.

It is only fair to say that Dilke did not agree with us. He was a born Parliamentarian; by this I mean he knew the British Parliament better than other men and loved it more. If you wanted a fair judgment of any British politician, Dilke was your man. For thirty years he was a sort of Parliamentary mirror that would give you as true a reflection of Biggar or Parnell, the most hated of Irishmen, as of Gladstone or Lord Hartington, the most respected of Englishmen.

"You're both mistaken," he said positively; "Grey has made a great impression in the House and apparently without trying to make any impression, and that's a good sign."

"What do you mean 'without trying?' I asked.

"I mean," he replied, "that instead of picking some big debate and a crowded House for his best speeches, he just gets up in an ordinary way and yet makes his mark. Grey has the great manner."

"What an aristocrat you are at heart, Dilke," cried Frederic, "in spite of your so-called Radicalism. Another genius earmarked by the governing classes for great place because he belongs to the sacrosanct caste and has nice manners."

"So you'll concede his manners," replied Dilke, laughing. "You know he's an old Wykehamist, and the motto of Winchester is: 'Manners makyth man.'" While Dilke went on to explain Winchester College to Frederic, telling of its old foundation and how some of the scholars still ate off thick flat oaken platters as their forbears had done four centuries before, I couldn't help noticing how the phrase "manners makyth man" had been degraded in England. Of course, at first the word "manners" was the English translation of the Latin *mores* (French, *moeurs*), and stood for customs, morals, rather than mere "manners." The modern English have practically altered "character makes a man" into "manners make a man" — a degradation, I think soul-revealing.

Meanwhile the talk went on. Dilke told us

that Grey came of an old Whig family, and had the Whig tradition of modernity and urbanity. Frederic asked him about Grey's means, and we found out that when Grey came of age he had inherited some two thousand or three thousand pounds a year (say about fifteen thousand dollars), and a very nice house with some two thousand acres of land.

"He's comfortably off," Dilke concluded, "though he married, very young, a neighbor of his in Northumberland, a Miss Dorothy Widdrington of Newton Hall, who also comes of famous stock. . . ."

Though my first published impression of Grey was summary and harsh, it created a certain stir; yet it did not alter Grey's cordial manner to me in the slightest. When we met he was always very courteous. A little later I found occasion to praise him warmly; neither praise nor blame had the smallest effect on his imperturbable, smiling politeness. Evidently his quiet reserve covered a certain depth—what depth?

Grey's immediate success in the House of Commons is very characteristic, and is one of the best things I can say of the House after a quarter of a century's knowledge of it. He spoke seldom and never at great length; said nothing novel, yet arrested attention—created an interest in his personality and left an impression of most scrupulous honor.

After being some six years in Parliament he was made Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1892, when he was only just thirty. Lord Rosebery, his chief, being in the House of Lords, the brunt of the work fell on Grey in the Commons. In an hour he confirmed his reputation, a reputation of the sort that's most esteemed in England, a reputation for high character. And every year of office afterwards increased his authority in the House and his influence till he came to be regarded with a certain awe.

His unique position is due to a variety of causes, personal and political, but the chief cause is undoubtedly his manner. England is the only country in the world where a man may win to the front by mere manners, but the manners must be English. Every nation has its ideal, and the governing classes in England, who give the tone to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, cherish a peculiar ideal of manner, the manner of a cold, courteous, quiet master. Lord Lansdowne has a good deal of this manner, and in itself it is sufficient to account for his influence as leader of the Conservative party in the Upper House. It is rare, indeed, that anyone in the House of Lords raises his voice; emotion or passion—excitement of any kind—is regarded as a sign of weakness.

Grey's manner will suit the House of Lords even better than it suited the Commons. Be-

sides, it is the fitting vesture of his spirit and curiously perfect.

Let us study it in its effects. Grey's manner naturally appealed to the Conservatives first; very soon they threw down their arms before it and declined to attack him. "Grey's all right," they said; "a true-blue Englishman." And when in the South African War he stood aloof from his party, in favor of war, they took him to their heart of hearts. Their belief that he was an aristocrat in mind as well as manner appeared to be justified. "Of course he's an Imperialist," they chortled; "he has no sympathy with the Radical crew and their peace-at-any-price rot; you can count on Grey; Grey's a great Englishman."

There was danger for a year or two, danger that Grey, so honored by his opponents, would yield to the flattering pressure and become too masterful, too Imperialistic, too Conservative, in fine. From the beginning the Radicals were inclined to dislike and to distrust him; his reticence, his balance, his studied moderation, were offensive to them; the Labor members and Radicals, inclined to suspect good manners as a mask, detested his suave imperturbability. It was an advantage, they admitted, that Grey should conciliate the Conservatives, but no one could do this, they argued, unless he was at heart one of them. For years they refused him any cordial support.

When Lloyd George brought in his Socialist state-insurance measures and spoke with passionate sympathy for the half-paid working classes and their wrongs, the ordinary Liberals were as much alarmed as the crusted Tories.

Everyone who counted was against him; yet soon it was whispered about the House with wonder that Grey was a thoroughgoing supporter. The air cleared as by magic. The sullen Radical distrust vanished like vapor.

From that moment on Grey reigned in the House, and, strange to say, it was the extreme members on both sides who built up his pedestal. The Tory was delighted to recount his feats at tennis: "About the best player in England, don't ye know." And even the Socialists found pleasure in the fact that his chief recreation was fly fishing, and not hunting or shooting or anything that resembled luxury and entailed waste.

For five or six years before the war Grey had applause enough to turn a strong head and no opposition of any sort. Perhaps that explains in part why he prepared for war and when the moment came was willing to make it, without consulting his colleagues, as an autocrat.

Besides doing excellently well whatever he undertakes, Grey has other virtues. In an aristocratic society everything is known; but no word has ever been breathed against Grey in his private relations. Though neither a Puritan nor

unduly strait-laced, his married life was understood to be very happy, and when his wife was killed a few years ago in a carriage accident, just in front of his own gates, he was known to have suffered intensely.

The man is all of a piece; no flaw in his unsullied armor.

Now I must come to his soul and depict the heart of him. Fortunately the chief features are distinct. Like all of us, his best is discovered in his admirations: what we love reveals us, if it does not betray. Above all writers, Grey admires Wordsworth, and Wordsworth's utmost reach of spirit is to be found in his delight in nature on the one hand and on the other in his passionate love of England and the highest English ideals.

Everyone remembers the famous passage in which all Wordsworth's joy in nature found expression; it begins:

Nature never did betray the heart that loved her:

Grey feels the appeal of this just as strongly as the poet felt it. His fly-fishing is hardly more than an excuse to gratify his love of nature and his delight in solitary communion with her. There is a natural melancholy in such a spirit. Every lover of the ideal must often be disappointed and saddened through his intercourse with men and women, and he will turn eagerly from the silly, self-admiring puppets to the tran-

quail beauty of woodland, lake, and mountain for recreation and healing. Viscount Grey finds himself in the ordered loveliness of the English countryside.

And Wordsworth's love of England and what he imagines that England stands for in the world is even more intense and passionate than his love of nature. In spite of his disgust at the "sordidness" of England—"the fen of stagnant waters," Wordsworth had all an Englishman's belief in his country's unique greatness and destiny:

. . . . *In our halls is hung
Armory of the invincible Knights of old:
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals
hold
Which Milton held.—In everything we are
sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.*

Edward Grey loves England like this; indeed, his love for her is the motive power of his life, and his belief in her the passionate faith of his soul. To say he would die for her gladly is to put the fire of his patriotism too coldly; he wants nothing in life now but to spend and be spent for her; he has measured himself; he would far rather be another Chatham than a Lenin. His shortcoming is that he does not see the corresponding German belief in the same clear reasonable light.

Is Grey, then, a great man? It is very hard to say; he has not yet finished his work. He has always shown rigid strength of character. In this war he has proved himself a consummate diplomatist, carrying public opinion with him, even the public opinion of all the neutral States for the first year, at least, with perfect ease, and yet to some of them England's objects must have appeared sufficiently sordid.

The German papers, even the official organs, all condemn Grey; call him a "liar"; talk of "his genius for duplicity"; but independent journals in Italy, as in the United States and in Spanish South America, are loud in his praise. Whom are we to believe?

I have tried to give my readers the facts, so that they can form their own judgment. I have a high opinion of Grey's honesty, sincerity, and nobility of purpose, and a great liking for the man himself, yet I cannot but wish that he had kept the peace in 1914 as he kept it in 1911. I believe his opponents are just as responsible for the war as he is; but there is no doubt that if he had really wished it, he could have held back both France and Russia and maintained peace. We know now that six of the Cabinet resigned when they found that Grey had thrust England into the struggle. But four withdrew their resignations when Asquith reminded them how necessary it was to show a united front to the foe.

Still the fault may not be counted against Grey in history. Bismarck admitted that he had made the war with France, yet Bismarck stands and will stand as the greatest statesman and leader of men since the first Napoleon.¹ But Bismarck waged only victorious wars and certainly strengthened and enlarged his country. Bismarck, too, though a Junker and imperialist to boot, is memorable chiefly because of his work for the welfare of the laboring classes. He practically banished starvation from Germany and insured the destitute against the worst results of competitive labor; in his pity for weakness the strong man laid broad bases for eternity in the affection of mankind. Will Grey do as much? I doubt it; yet one can only wait and hope.

One fact gives me pause, makes me wonder whether any English statesmen will ever be able to rise above the conventions of English public life.

Viscount Grey began his official career as Under-Secretary to Lord Rosebery, who was Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Now, when Foreign Secretary himself, he appointed Neil Primrose, the youngest son of Lord Rosebery, his Under-Secretary. Neil Primrose was only thirty-two years of age; had only been in Parliament since 1910, and had given no sign of commanding ability or even of singular suitability

for that office. He was the son of his father, and, therefore, preferred before abler men.

The governing classes in England all hold together and regard political office as their appanage; indeed, they act as if all the high offices of state were to be shared out among them and their supporters, and so, for the most part, they have mediocrities as dignitaries and the purblind as guides, and the nation suffers in consequence. It is more than a pity that Edward Grey did not hold himself above such weakness. I'm pretty sure I am right in attributing the appointment to him: he had so much influence that Mr. Asquith would never have dreamt of appointing anyone in his department without consulting Grey; and Grey probably reconciled the appointment to his conscience by thinking of it as a graceful compliment to his old chief, and Grey is nothing if not loyal. And now, willy-nilly, I must tell of his shortcomings.

His chief stumbling-block has been that he does not know German or Germany; he does not even know French; his mental outlook is insular and limited. He saw how rapidly Germany was growing as an industrial competitor of England in wealth and power; but he had no conception of the virtues which made her growth inevitable. Grey's reputation, like many more important things, depends on the outcome of the war and the aftermath.

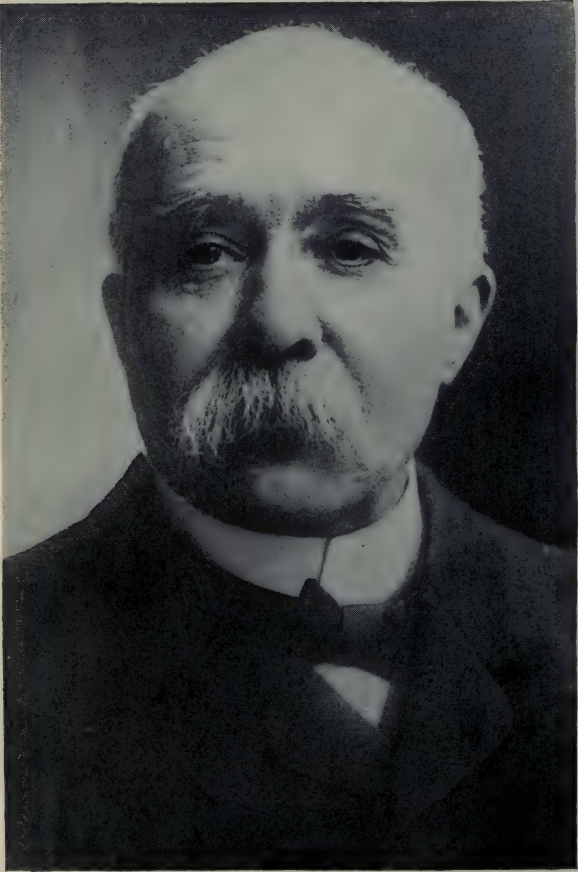
If the Allies had overwhelmed Germany quickly, he would have been a popular hero in England and France; his failings would all have been forgotten; his virtues belauded.

The war lasted so long, cost so much, and brought forth so little good that Grey's reputation has suffered. The outward and visible sign of this is that he has been "kicked upstairs" and made a member of the House of Lords—a peerage as a sort of consolation prize. The best thing I can say for Grey is that no personal advantage, no honor, will ever console him for having led his country into a war which has already cost more in blood and treasure than England can get out of it.

The war has shown England's strength and England's weakness; but alas! she is being praised for diplomacy which she does not admire and has failed in the field where she thought herself supreme. Everyone knows that if she had not induced America to enter the war, she would have been forced to conclude even an ignoble peace before the summer of 1917. True, she has got the German ships and most of the German-African colonies; true, her great commercial rival is lamed if not ruined, but the price paid has been enormous, altogether disproportionate, she is inclined to believe.

Moreover, the war has revealed Germany's strength, the strength of order, discipline, learn-

ing and socialized industries. Vaguely in spite of her customary habit of self-praise, England feels she has not come brilliantly out of the desperate trial and consequently is inclined to blame Grey. And what does Grey feel? Doubtful, I imagine; but with a certain faint hope in the League of Nations and a warmth about the heart when he remembers that the great plateau of Central Africa from the Cape to Cairo is now English—a landlord pride in broad acres.



George Clemenceau

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU:

A First Rate Fighting Man!



IN THE third year of the world-war the task of governing France had become exceedingly difficult. From the very beginning Ministers had worked with the Socialists in order to buttress their popularity. But in the summer of 1917 Albert Thomas and other socialists refused to enter the Cabinet and Ministry after Ministry fell, partly through their vote, partly through the growing discontent. France was tired of the war; as the book "Under Fire," showed, the soldiers in the trenches were all wearied of the fighting. They saw or thought they saw that every inch of French soil would have to be bought back with torrents of French blood; they didn't think the game worth the candle. More than once French soldiers threw down their weapons and left the field; it must be admitted that there was a general belief that in fighting was no freedom and from bloodshed no deliverance.

The Socialists feeling the support of the army behind them, stood more and more strongly against the prosecution of the war, more and

more resolutely in favor of an immediate peace. On the other hand, the sentiment of the governing classes was to hold with England and prosecute the war to victory at all costs. It was the dominance of this class that brought Clemenceau, the most masterful Radical, back to power. Every representative of the French people knew that he was the best fighting man they had; he was hated personally but accepted as a last hope.

And when you ask why he was and is so detested you are told that for twenty years he brought Ministry after Ministry to a fall till he became known as the "Tombeur des Ministeres," or "The Wrecker," but that is not the real explanation of his unpopularity. The truth is he is too big a man to be popular and he has besides a bitter vein in him which most people dislike. For instance, almost as soon as he came to power again he was asked by some Socialist in the Chamber what were his plans. He replied: "I have only one plan, to win the war and drive the invaders out of France." And then he paused and turned to the House, "and when I have succeeded you can bring in a vote of censure on me and it will no doubt be carried unanimously with the aid of the good friends who now cheer me."

This complete disillusionment; this pungent bitterness is the very soul-characteristic of Georges Clemenceau and such a pitiless naked

vision of reality is always and everywhere unpopular.

Georges Clemenceau is almost a great man, utterly unlike the politicians, the Briands, the Vivianis, the Asquiths and the Wilsons, clever self-seekers and speakers. There is something dynamic in the man; he is almost of the race of the Bismarcks. Let me try to give a picture of him, body, mind and soul. He is short and sturdily built, with vital organs, heart, etc., disproportionately large and strong, with a good round head and small blue-gray eyes set wide apart; the forehead broad like the chin and jaws. He listens intently, then decides abruptly, will-force rather than thought the first characteristic of him.

He is one of the most famous duellists of his time, the most dreaded opponent with both sword and pistol in France since Paul de Casagnac died. Everyone remembers his historical quarrel with Paul Deroulede. His enemies had accused him of being opposed to the alliance with Russia; forged letters were circulated to prove that he had sold French interests to England. Deroulede, a hot-headed but honest patriot, believed all the slanders, persuaded himself too, that Clemenceau's own colleagues were suspicious of him but afraid to attack him because of his skill with pen and sword, so he made himself the mouthpiece of the general hatred

and denounced Clemenceau as a traitor to his country.

The whole assembly sat with indrawn breath wondering how Clemenceau would answer. He walked quietly to the Tribune and then: "M. Deroulede, you lie."

They met next day and parted without injury. Clemenceau, recognizing the honesty of his enemy, fired in the air. A week later the forgeries were discovered, but already the mischief was done. Clemenceau had to resign; his political career appeared to be ended.

As soon as he lost his premiership in 1908 Clemenceau turned to writing and showed himself a fine workman if not a master in the new field. He produced a play which filled the *Renaissance* theatre for a good many nights; he wrote a novel, too, "The Strongest" (*Les Plus Forts*), a satire of social conditions too acrid to be popular, and a book of philosophic essays which gave him rank as political thinker. Fortunately I can give my readers some idea of his gift as a writer.

The other evening at the French Theatre in New York a little Chinese play by Clemenceau was given which seemed to me peculiarly characteristic of the man. A blind Chinese gentleman is presented as very happy in the love of his wife and the affection of friends. He recovers his sight and finds out that his wife is betray-

ing him with his best friend and his hired companion is cheating him of his fame as a poet. After a series of such experiences, he blinds himself again willingly: "One must be blind to be happy," he says. The moral is harshly acid, but has some truth in it.

There's a short story of Clemenceau still more biting. It is called "Simon, fils de Simon."

Simon, son of Simon, plays in the lottery and prays to Jehovah for success, promising him a fifth part of the gain, but he wins nothing. Then he invokes the God of the Christians, making the same promise, and is awarded the Grand Prize. The coffers of the church grow no richer for his good fortune. "The proof that Jahveh is superior to the Christian God," he reasons is that he knew that "I could never bring myself to part with a hundred thousand florins. He knoweth our hearts. He does not expect the impossible from us. The Christian God was deceived by my good faith, of which I was for a time the dupe myself. Jahveh alone is great, my son."

Clemenceau is the only politician in the world to-day who can write plays and stories that deserve consideration.

In his own way, too, Clemenceau is one of the most effective speakers living. Like everything he does, his speaking is intensely characteristic; he stands rigidly, talks slowly, deliberately rather, as if he were weighing every word and seldom raises or alters the inflection of his voice. But

his clear incisive tone compels attention, especially in a Chamber where everyone is inclined to be wordy and rhetorical. There is no ornament, no appeal, no wish to round out a period; a clear frank acrid statement of facts, with now and again a biting phrase, a word cruel in its sarcasm.

One can get some idea of his power of retort from a story told of his first premiership. He had hardly assumed power when a well-known selfseeking prefect called upon him and began:

"I hope you'll believe M. Clemenceau, that I am not here to adore the rising sun."

At once Clemenceau interrupted. "I understand; you don't know on which side to look for it, eh?"

His power as a political writer can be measured by one incident. It was the Dreyfus affair that really brought him back to power. He was among the first to be convinced of the Jewish officer's innocence, and at once opened the columns of his paper to Zola and other defenders. His own articles were able, quite as able as those of Zola; indeed, it was Clemenceau suggested the famous "*J'accuse*" of the papers which made Zola's defence of Dreyfus rank forever with Voltaire's defence of Calas.

There are great things in the man. He has not only labored indefatigably as First Minister, but has given his whole strength to encourage the army leaders.

No matter how heavy or difficult his own work was, again and again in those dreadful six months from March to September, 1918, the old man would leave Paris early in the morning and hasten by train and motorcar to the point of attack. There he would consult with General Foch or General Gouraud, as the case might be, and was always full of fight. Whoever might doubt he never doubted. He was the hero soul of France incarnate and assured of final victory.

There is a magnanimity in him which reminds one of Bismarck and Frederick the Great. It is known that the French only instituted the censorship because of the English example. The first act of Clemenceau when he was recently made Premier for the second time, was to abolish the political censorship. When questioned in the Chamber he said quietly that he believed in freedom both of thought and speech and didn't mind what anyone said of him or his government. An opponent tried to score off him by saying that they all hoped he would free the soil of France.

"I shall do my best," replied Clemenceau, tartly; "in the meantime it is something to have freed the soul of France."

The whole Chamber applauded.

It is not to denigrate him that I say in the Peace Conference, he showed the defects of his disillusionment and intense combativeness. He

wished to lame Germany once for all and render her powerless; his fighting spirit prevented him seeing that this was the moment to conquer by high-souled generosity. If he had refused to take Alsace-Lorraine or only taken such parts as would be accorded by an ethnological Commission, he would have shown his faith in justice and right and would have proved himself the superior of Bismarck. Bismarck, it will be remembered, did not wish to annex Lorraine after '70; it was Moltke who insisted on keeping Metz. Alsace, Bismarck held, was German in every sense.

But Clemenceau has taken Alsace as well Lorraine, and the coal-mines of the Saar that are completely German and he wanted the whole of the German Rhine provinces to boot. He is shortsighted in his greed and has overreached himself. Germany will have Strassburg before there can be any enduring peace. Clemenceau said the other day that in the Peace Conference he won more than he expected to win, more than France ever hoped to win. That's the fact; thanks to Mr. Wilson he has won too much.

He is all of a piece. He is the only Frenchman of position in 1871 who declared that they should not make peace with Germany, but fight the thing to a finish. Everybody sees now that he was wrong; it was his fighting spirit and not

his wisdom that dictated his counsel, and that fact we must today keep in mind.

Let me glance back for a moment at his youth and early training and see if his past throws any new light on his peculiar powers.

Twenty-five years ago Clemenceau was a great friend of Sir Charles Dilke, one of the few Englishmen who knew French as well as he knew English and was besides a confirmed Radical.

Shortly after Dilke's fall he gave me a letter to Clemenceau. Dilke was an able man, but he had nothing dynamic, no touch of greatness in him. Clemenceau was of a higher class. I was very eager to know about his duels and was astonished to find he practiced either sword or pistol almost every day.

"Fencing," he declared, "is the best form of exercise that anyone can take; it keeps the eye and hand and foot in perfect trim and tune; if there is a weak point in you it will show up on the 'terrain.' And if there is a weak point in your mind," he would add, laughingly, "you will find it in the cut and thrust of a debate in the Chamber." He loves fighting for its own sake; he is a perfect incarnation of the Gallic cock.

I wanted to know about his early life, and he told me that his father was a stalwart Republican and had been imprisoned by Napoleon III at the Coup d'Etat.

His mother was so well educated that she

was able to prepare him for high school. He spoke of himself always as a product of the great French revolution.

Before he was twenty he was thrown into prison for crying "Vive la Republique," during the celebration of an imperial anniversary. He served his time in jail and then came to America. Between 1865 and 1869 he lived in New York and in Stamford, Conn. He established himself as a medical practitioner at West 12th Street and for some time was well known about Washington Square.

He was never interested, he told me, in medicine, though his thesis on anatomy, a presentation copy of which can be found in the Astor Library, is an admirable treatise.

Clemenceau learned a great deal in America; but he is chary of saying what he thinks of it; he avoids unprofitable condemnation by an epigram: "Americans have no original ideas and no coffee fit to drink."

It is not to be wondered at that his judgment of America is somewhat summary and severe. He was not able to make a living as a doctor. Though he knew English remarkably well, he was not sufficiently master of it for his mind to move freely in that rather heavy harness, so he suffered a good deal from poverty in New York and finally got employed by a Miss Aiken in a girls' boarding school at Stamford as a teacher

of French. That America could use Georges Clemenceau in no higher way than as teacher of French in a young ladies' seminary is sufficient criticism of our civilization to anyone who understands the full significance of the fact.

While a teacher he translated the political economy of John Stuart Mill into French and thereby showed the deeper affinities of his mind. Like the Englishman he was a believer in individualism and therefore in liberty in the widest sense. But like Mill, too, he had an active sense of social justice; thought that employment should be found by the state for anyone who wanted it and that a minimum wage and a very high minimum wage should be given to all working men and women. A born individualist, he yet believed in the nationalization of railways, telegraphs, telephones and all public utilities; but he has always felt that progress comes through the gifted individual and by virtue of his efforts and in no other way.

He fell in love with one of his pupils and married her in June, 1869. A year later he returned with his wife to France. After some years Mrs. Clemenceau obtained a divorce and Clemenceau married again.

During the Franco-Prussian war Clemenceau was mayor of Montmartre and one of his duties was to see that 150,000 men were properly fed. He thus became responsible for large amounts of

money, and foreseeing the accusations that might be brought against any official's honesty in those trying times, he took the precaution from the beginning of engaging an expert accountant to take charge of and disburse every cent of the public funds.

At the end of the war, though mayor of the most popular district of Paris, he stood out against the Commune; yet for five long years he worked for a general amnesty for all the Communards. He thought them mistaken but after all they were Frenchmen. From 1871 to 1875 he was a member of the Paris Municipal Council of which he became President.

In '70 he was elected member from Montmartre to the Chamber of Deputies where at once he was hailed as leader by the Radicals.

Clemenceau soon became more a subject of dread and dislike to his own side than to his opponents. He founded a newspaper, *La Justice*, a great daily, and used it as a weapon. He destroyed the de Broglie administration. He first helped and then overthrew Boulanger. He caused the fall of Jules Grevy, and of Jules Ferry. He wrecked the activities and position of Freycinet again and again.

Yet his own policy was a consistent radical Republicanism, clear and practical; he stood for the realization of all that the first, great revolution had dreamed. He was wiser than his

rivals; he opposed the alliance with Russia, determined that his country should not be joined in close friendship with a despotism. He urged constantly the development of French resources to the utmost.

In November, 1906, he became Premier. As some one said, "the Conscience of France" came to power. He chose for his Minister of Foreign Affairs, his friend Stephen Pichon, who served him again in 1918 and 1919. Both Pichon and Clemenceau were soon tested. In those years the Kaiser was continually rattling his sword; he had bullied over the Schnaebele affair; he had got Delcasse dismissed; now the Casablanca incident gave him another opportunity; would France again give in? Clemenceau refused the German demand, not with the courteous phrases of diplomacy, but flatly and without qualification. In November, 1908, he called the Kaiser's bluff. Strange to say, this triumph let to his fall.

Delcassé his old enemy, rose up suddenly and overthrew his Ministry. A discussion over naval affairs sprang up almost overnight. There were scandals, investigations, controversies. For the first time in his Parliamentary career, Clemenceau lost his head. At least he lost his temper. declared that Delcassé had "humiliated France," and in consequence was himself ousted from office. He kept his position, however, in the Sen-

ate. In 1912 he overthrew Caillaux' Ministry. In 1913 he wrecked Briand's Cabinet on the issue of proportional representation. At the beginning of the war he started a new paper, *L'Homme Libre*—The Freeman—which was suppressed; at once he started it again as "The Man in Chains."

In April, 1918, he was outspoken in his censure of the management of the allied offensive. He was somewhat scornful of America's long-continued neutrality, but was enthusiastic in his welcome when the United States at length entered the war.

And now what is there to hope or fear from Clemenceau? First of all, he is seventy-seven years old; all the leading politicians in France dislike him; the Socialists dislike him the more because he sympathizes with some of their aims and yet holds himself aloof. Has he done anything new? Has he done anything new since the Armistice? Is he likely to do anything memorable in the future?

I am fain to believe that he reached his highest height in the summer of 1918 when he forced the unification of command under Foch by threatening to make peace with Germany if the suggestion were rejected and made himself as I have described, the life and soul of the French offensive.

Now he declares that after all the peace ar-

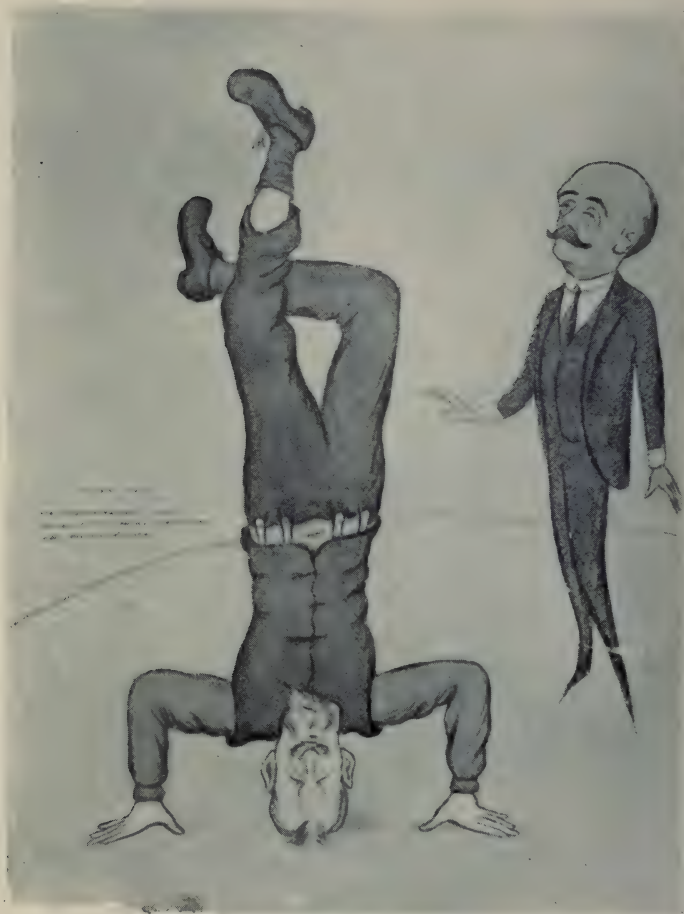
rangements have been carried out he will retire from political life; his life's work rounded, crowned if you will, by an unique triumph. But such complete success proclaims his limitations. Clemenceau belongs to the day and hour and the future will owe him little or nothing. He is as fine an embodiment of the French fighting spirit as time has produced; but France has always been rich in great fighters; he is absolutely honest, too, in a greedy age, and singularly disinterested; in private life he can be magnanimous, but when called on to play statesman he showed himself greedy and vindictive and thereby laid upon his country too heavy a burden.

Cromwell, surely a fighting man if ever there was one, when asked once about his parents, said that he loved his mother, but always admired his father intensely because he was never satisfied with any bargain in which he got the best of the other man. Even the Romans who thought it well to conquer the proud, knew that it was wise to be generous to the defeated.

When will politicians learn that no treaty or compact can endure that is not founded on justice, and that loving-kindness is the only binding tie between men and nations?

For Clemenceau the definitive signing of peace and the elections in January, 1920, must be the end. He broke a rib the other day merely traveling to London and my prediction

of four months ago that if he allowed himself to stand for President he would be defeated by Paul Deschanel has been fulfilled. Twenty-six years ago they fought a duel and Clemenceau wounded Deschanel savagely; now time has brought retribution and Clemenceau has had to submit to a final defeat; yet he has done enough and more than enough to ensure him a high place in the Pantheon of French worthies forever.



Shaw as Seen by Max

SHAW'S PORTRAIT BY SHAW, or
HOW FRANK OUGHT TO HAVE
DONE IT.

(After finishing my pen-portrait of Shaw I sent him a copy asking him to correct any errors in it. He replied by telling me that it was incorrigible and sending me the following portrait of himself as an example of how I ought to have written about him. Just as I published Shaw's views of Oscar Wilde in my book on Wilde so now I publish Shaw's self-portrait so that my readers can compare it with my view of him.—FRANK HARRIS.)



BEFORE attempting to add Bernard Shaw to my collection of Contemporary Portraits I find it necessary to secure myself in advance by the fullest admission of his extraordinary virtues. Without any cavilling over trifles I declare at once that Shaw is the just man made perfect. I admit that in all his controversies, and in all possible controversies, with me or anyone else, Shaw is, always has been, and always will be, right. I perceive that the common habit of abusing him is an ignorant and silly habit, and that the pretence of not taking him seriously is the ridiculous cover for an ignominious retreat

from an encounter with him. If there is any other admission I can make, any other testimonial I can give, I am ready to give it and to apologize for having omitted it. If it will help matters to say that Shaw is the greatest man that ever lived, I shall not hesitate for a moment. All the cases against him break down when they are probed to the bottom. All his prophecies come true. All his fantastic creations come to life within a generation. I have an uneasy sense that even now I am not doing him justice—that I am ungrateful, disloyal, disparaging. I can only repeat that if there is anything I have left out, all that is necessary is to call my attention to the oversight, and it shall be remedied. If I cannot say that Shaw touches nothing that he does not adorn, I can at least testify that he touches nothing that he does not dust and polish and put back in its place much more carefully than the last man who handled it.

Once, at a public dinner given by the Stage Society, Shaw had to propose the health of the dramatic critics; and Max Beerbohm had to reply. Before the speaking began Max came to Shaw and said, "You are going to say, aren't you, that you are a critic yourself?" "I don't know what I am going to say," said Shaw; "but I daresay I shall bring that in." "Promise me that you will," said Max: "I want to make a point about it". "Anything to oblige you," said

Shaw; and he did. Max began his speech thus: "I was once at a school where the master used always to say, 'Remember, boys, that I am one of yourselves.' " A roar of laughter saved Max the trouble of pointing the moral.

Robert Lynd said of Shaw's "Common Sense About the War" that though nobody could take any reasonable exception to it, yet from the moment it appeared the war was spoken of and written about as a war between the Allies on the one hand, and, on the other, Germany, Austria, Turkey and Bernard Shaw.

When Shaw contested a seat at the London County Council election as a Progressive, after six years hard Progressive drudgery on a Borough Council, with the advantage of being one of the inventors of municipal Progressivism, not only was he defeated by the defection of all the Liberals and temperance reformers (Shaw is a teetotaler); but the leading Progressive papers also exulted in his defeat as a most blessed deliverance. The only people who voted for him were those who had never voted before. This was proved by an enormous increase in the poll at the next election.

These are the things that happen to him in his most popular moments, when he is in no way breasting and opposing the current of public opinion. When, as often happens, he has to take his chance of being lynched for telling some

unpalatable truth, or taking some unpopular side, numbers of persons who have never before betrayed any hostility to him have been emboldened to believe that they had him "on the run" at last, and have suddenly vented on him a bitterness and violence which must have been rankling in them for years.

The result is that hardly anyone who has not met Shaw thinks of him otherwise than as a man of disagreeable appearance, harsh and wounding manners, and insufferable personality. One of his favorite sayings is "I always astonish strangers by my amiability, because, as no human being could possibly be so disagreeable as they expect me to be, I have only to be commonly civil to seem quite charming."

No truthful contemporary portrait can ignore either this extraordinary power of exciting furious hostility, or the entire absence of any obvious ground for it. It has been said that Shaw irritates people by always standing on his head, and calling black white and white black. But only simpletons either offer or accept this account. Men do not win a reputation like Shaw's by perversity and tomfoolery. What is really puzzling is that Shaw irritates us intensely by standing on his feet and telling us that black is black and white is white, whilst other men please everybody by airing the most outrageous paradoxes and by repeating with an air of conviction

what everyone knows to be false. There is something maddening in being forced to agree with a man against whom your whole soul protests. It is not that he expresses your thought more accurately than you yourself have thought it, trying as this sort of correction would be if it were made consciously. It must be that there is something terrifying in finding one's views shared by a man whose conclusions are known to be monstrous and subversive. That little extra accuracy often reveals the brink of an abyss somewhere near. It is as if a man had offered to walk a bit of the way with you, because you were going in the direction of his home, and you know that home to be the bottomless pit.

Now it is quite true that Shaw's final and central conclusion is monstrous not only to the average conventional man, but to the most ardent revolutionist. I do not, of course, mean that he is a Socialist: "we are all Socialists now," nor am I thinking of his views on marriage; for he proposes nothing more than American States and some European ones have already carried out as nearly as no matter.

His religion of Creative Evolution is shared by hundreds of modern thinkers—Bergson for instance—who do not incur his singular unpopularity. Long before the war his most shocking play, "Mrs. Warren's Profession," was repudiated by the advanced section of Moscow Society

as the sermon of a bourgeois moralist; and before that even the American Bench had been able to find nothing in it that justified the outcry made against it. In short, there is nothing in Shaw's political and social program, not even his insistence on absolute equality of income and its dissociation from every kind of personal industry or virtue, at which a thinker of adequate modern equipment would turn a hair. He is a perfectly safe man on a committee of any sort: a man of tact and moderation who kept the Fabian Society, of which he was a leader for twenty-seven years, free from the quarrels that broke up all the other Socialist organizations.

Yet the monstrosity is there. Shaw works at politics in the spirit of one who is helping a lame dog over a stile which he believes to be insurmountable. He makes no secret of his conviction that the problems raised by the aggregation of men into civilization are beyond their political capacity, and will never be solved by them. He is at present engaged in a tetralogy in which, starting from the Garden of Eden, and ending thousands of years hence, he shows mankind shortening its life from a thousand years to three score and ten, and again lengthening it from three score and ten to three hundred: a prolongation which, as a Creative Evolutionist, he holds to be quite possible to the human will. But he makes no secret of his belief that

Man will be scrapped as a failure, and that the Life Force will replace him by some new and higher creation, just as man himself was created to supply the deficiencies of the lower animals. Fundamentally, then, Shaw has no reverence for us or for himself. And how much we are dependent on mutual reverence we never realize until we meet someone who denies it to us. Shaw is that someone. It is impossible to take offence, because he is as merciless to himself as to us. He does not kick us overboard and remain proudly on the quarter deck himself. With the utmost good humor he clasps us affectionately round the waist and jumps overboard with us, and that too, not into a majestic Atlantic where we might perish tragically, but into a sea of ridicule where we cut the poorest figure. And this intolerable trick is played on us at the most unexpected and inopportune moments. "No man," said Sir Henry Norman, "knows how to butter a moral slide better than Shaw." Shaw's support, and even his enthusiastic championship, thus becomes more dreaded than the most spiteful attacks of others. During the first Ibsen boom in London Shaw proposed to help an American actress in an Ibsen enterprise by interviewing her. To his astonishment the lady told him with passionate earnestness that if he wrote a word about her she would shoot him. "You may not

believe here in England that such things are possible," she said; "but in America we think differently; and I will do it: I have the pistol ready." "General Gabler's pistol," was Shaw's unruffled comment; but he saw how intensely the lady shrank from being handled by him in print, and the interview was not written. Some of his best friends confess that until they were used to him, quite friendly letters from him would sometimes move them to furious outbursts of profanity at his expense. He tells a story of an illiterate phrenologist with whom he got into conversation at a vegetarian restaurant in his early days. This man presently accused Shaw of being a sceptic. "Why?" said Shaw. "Have I no bump of veneration?" "Bump!" shouted the phrenologist. "It's a hole." The actor Irving, accustomed to a deference which a prelate might have envied, found Shaw unendurable. If Shaw's manners were offensive he would be easier to deal with; but his pity for you as a hopeless failure is so kindly, so covered by an unexceptionable observance of the perfect republican respect to which you are entitled, that you are utterly helpless: there is nothing to complain of, nothing to lay hold of, no excuse for snatching up the carving knife and driving it into his vitals.

I was the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* when I first met Shaw about an article. He

had an engaging air of being much more interested in me than in his article. Not to be mock modest, I suppose I *was* more interesting than the article; and I was naturally not disposed to quarrel with Shaw for thinking so and showing it. He has the art of getting on intimate and easy terms very quickly; and at the end of five minutes I found myself explaining to him how I had upset my health by boyishly allowing myself to be spurred into a trial of speed on the river in an outrigger, and overstraining myself in a fierce burst of speed. He gave his mind to my misfortune as sympathetically as my doctor, and asked me some questions as to what sort of care I was taking of myself. One of the questions was, "Do you drink?" I was equal to the occasion, and did not turn a hair, as I assured him that a diagnosis of delirium tremens could not be sustained; but I could not help becoming suddenly conscious that I expected from men an assumption that I was not a drunkard, a liar, a thief, or anything else of what I may call an actionable nature, and that I was face to face with a man who made no such assumption. His question was too like one of those asked in Butler's "Erewhon" to be entirely agreeable to human frailty. In Shaw's play, "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," the captain introduces his lieutenant with the words (or to this effect): "This is the greatest scoundrel, liar, thief and

rapscallion on the west coast." On which the lieutenant says, "Look here, Captain: if you want to be modest, be modest on your own account, not on mine." The fact that Shaw is modest on his own account, and gives himself away much more freely than his good manners allow him to give away his friends, does not really make the latter transaction any more pleasant for its victim: it only robs them of their revenge, and compels them to pay tribute to his amiability when they are furiously annoyed with him.

It is difficult to class a man who gives himself away even to the point of making himself ridiculous as vain. But all Shaw's friends agree that he is laughably vain. Yet here again he complicates our judgment by playing up to it with the most hyperbolical swank about his intellect. He declares that he does so because people like it. He says, quite truly, that they love Cyrano and hate "the modest cough of the minor poet." Those who praise his books to his face are dumbfounded by the enthusiasm with which he joins in his own praise, and need all their presence of mind to avoid being provoked into withdrawing some seventy-five per cent or so of their estimate. Such playacting makes it difficult to say how much real vanity or modesty underlies it all; but I feel safe in saying that Shaw, of late years at least, has found out his own value, and maybe in some danger

of not writing off his inevitable depreciation by advancing years quite fast enough. He himself says that he is not conceited. "No man can be," he says, "if, like me, he has spent his life trying to play the piano accurately, and never succeeded for a single bar." I ask him to give me a list of his virtues, his excellence, his achievements, so that I may not do him the injustice of omitting any. He replies: "It is unnecessary; they are all in the shop window."

Shaw plays the part of the modest man only in his relations with the arts which are the great rivals of literature. He has never claimed to be "better than Shakespeare." That much quoted heading to one of his prefaces has a note of interrogation after it, and the question is dismissed by himself with the remark that as Shakespeare in drama, like Mozart in opera, or Michael Angelo in fresco, reached the summit of his art, nobody can be better than Shakespeare, though anybody may now have things to say that Shakespeare did not say, and outlooks on life and character which were not open to him. Nevertheless, I am convinced that Shaw is as willing to have his plays compared with Shakespeare's as Turner was to have his pictures hung beside Claude's, though, he has not said so. But his attitude towards Rodin, for example, is quite different. When he was invited to a dinner in Paris given in honor of Rodin, he wrote

that he had no occasion to be merely Rodin's *convive*, as he already had the honor of being one of Rodin's models, and was sure of a place in the biographical dictionaries a thousand years hence as "Shaw, Bernard: subject of a bust by Rodin: otherwise unknown." He struck the same note when, finding that Rodin, though an infallible connoisseur in sculpture, had no books in his collection except the commonest kind of commercial presentation volumes, he presented him with a Kelmscott Chaucer, and wrote in it:

I have seen two masters at work, Morris who made this book,
The other Rodin the Great, who fashioned my head in
clay:

I give the book to Rodin, scrawling my name in a nook
Of the shrine their works shall hallow when mine are dust
by the way.

Now I confess I am not convinced by this evidence of modesty as I am not sure that it is not rather the final artistic touch to Shaw's swank. For what was the origin of the Rodin bust? Rodin knew nothing about Shaw, and at first refused to undertake the commission. Mrs. Shaw thereupon wrote to Rodin pleading that she wished to have a memorial of her husband, and that her husband declared that any man who, being a contemporary of Rodin, would have his bust made by anyone else, would pillory himself to all posterity as an ignoramus. Rodin,

finding that he had to deal with a man who knew his value, weakened in his refusal. Mrs. Shaw then ascertained from Rilke, the Austrian poet, who was then acting as Rodin's secretary, what his usual fee was for a bust. The money (only \$5,000) was immediately lodged to Rodin's credit on the understanding that he was to be under no obligation whatever in respect of it, and might make the bust or not make it, begin it and leave it off if it did not interest him: in short, treat the payment as a contribution to the endowment of his work in general and remain completely master of the situation. The result, of course, was that Rodin sent for Shaw to come to Paris at once; installed him and his wife as daily guests at his Meudon villa; worked steadily at the bust every day for a month until it was finished; and went beyond his bargain in giving his sitter casts of it. Here we have the dexterous Shaw, the master of blarney, and the penetrating art critic; and not for a moment do I suggest that there was the slightest insincerity in his proceedings: had there been, Rodin would not have been taken in. But was there no vanity in it? Would so busy a man as Shaw have left his work and gone to Paris to pose like a professional model for a whole month if he had not thought his bust as important as the busts of Plato which are now treasures of the museums which possess them?

It will be noted that I have spoken of Shaw playacting, playing the part, and so forth. I have done so advisedly. Shaw is an incorrigible and continuous actor, using his skill as deliberately in his social life as in his professional work in the production of his own plays. He does not deny this. "G. B. S.," he says, "is not a real person: he is a legend created by myself, a pose, a reputation. The real Shaw is not a bit like him." Now this is exactly what all his acquaintances say of the Rodin bust, that is is not a bit like him. But Shaw maintains that it is the only portrait that tells the truth about him. When Rodin was beginning the work in his studio Mrs. Shaw complained to him that all the artists and caricaturists, and even the photographs, aimed at producing the sort of suburban Mephistopheles they imagined Shaw to be, without ever taking the trouble to look at him. Rodin replied, "I know nothing about Mr. Shaw's reputation; but I will give you what is there." Shaw declares he was as good as his word. When Troubetskoi saw the Rodin bust he declared that there was no life in the eyes; and in three hours frenzied work he produced his bust of Shaw. As a *tour de force* it is magnificent; but it is Mephistopheles, not suburban, but aristocratic. "Very gratifying to my snobbish family," said Shaw; "but not my pose." He liked the bust and liked Troubetskoi; but his wife would have

none of it, nor of the curious portrait by Neville Lytton, which originated in an allegation by Granville Barker that Velasquez' portrait of Pope Innocent was an excellent portrait of Shaw. Lytton accordingly painted Shaw in the costume and attitude of Innocent; and though the picture is a convincing revelation of what Shaw would be like in the papal chair, Pope Bernard will never be identified by any antiquary with the subject of the Rodin bust. Augustus John's portraits of Shaw are even less reconcilable with the Rodin. John has projected all Shaw's public strength and assurance at their fullest intensity, indeed at more than lifesize. "There is the great Shaw," says the sitter, when he shows his friends the picture. But when he points to the Rodin, he says, "Just as I am, without one plea." De Smet's portrait is that of a quiet delicate elderly gentleman: Shaw likes it. Lady Scott's statuette is friendly and literal. (And now please note that this busy modest Shaw, who never has time enough or vanity enough to accept the invitations to sit for his portrait which are showered on him, has nevertheless contrived to provide memorials of himself by the greatest masters of his time. Can true modesty be so colossal, and so difficult to distinguish from a conceit that no man should allow himself until he has been dead for at least five hundred years?

Shaw is the greatest pedant alive, Dickens'

man who ate crumpets on principle could not hold a candle to him in this respect. Descriptive reporters have said that Shaw wears a flannel shirt. He never wore a flannel shirt in his life. He does not wear a shirt at all, because it is wrong to swaddle one's middle with a double thickness of material: therefore he wears some head-to-foot undergarment unknown to shirt-makers. The flannel fable arose because, at a time when it was socially impossible for a professional man to appear in public in London without a white starched collar, he maintained that no educated eye could endure the color contrast of ironed starch against European flesh tones, and that only a very black and brilliant negro should wear such a collar. He therefore obtained and wore gray collars. Now that the fashion is changed, he wears collars of various colors; but the dye is always chosen to carry out a theory that the best color effect is that of two shades of the same color. His coat is of the smartest West End tailoring; but it is unlined, on principle. He addresses a letter high up in the left hand corner of an envelope. A mere affectation of singularity you say. Not at all: he will talk to you for an hour on the beauty of the system of page margins established by the medieval scribes and adopted by William Morris, and on its practicality as leaving room for the postman's thumb, and considering his con-

venience in reading the address. He justifies his refusal to use apostrophes and inverted commas in printing his books on the ground that they spoil the appearance of the page, declaring that the Bible would never have attained its supreme position in literature if it had been disfigured with such unsightly signs. He is interested in phonetics and systems of shorthand; and it is to his pedantic articulation that he owes his popularity as a public speaker in the largest halls, as every word is heard with exasperating distinctness. He advocates a combination of the metric system with the duodecimal by inserting two new digits into our numeration, thus: eight, nine, tee, ee, ten, and eighteen, nineteen, eeteen teeteen, twenty and so forth. He likes machines as a child likes toys, and once very nearly bought a cash register without having the slightest use for it. When he was on the verge of sixty he yielded to the fascination of a motor bicycle, and rode it away from the factory for seventy-seven miles, at the end of which, just outside his own door, he took a corner too fast and was left sprawling. He has been accused of being one of the band of devoted lunatics who bathe in the Serpentine (the ornamental water in Hyde Park, London), every morning throughout the year, rain or shine; but this is an invention. He does, however, when in London, swim in the bathing pool of the Royal Automobile Club every morning

before breakfast, winter and summer, his alleged reason being that as an Irishman he dislikes washing himself, but cannot do without the stimulus of a plunge into cold water. He is, as all the world knows, a vegetarian; but he derides the hygienic pretensions of that diet. He values health very highly, like all faddists; but he declares that all men who are any good, will trade on their stock of health to the very utmost limit, and therefore live on the verge of a breakdown. Every really busy man, he declares, should go to bed for eighteen months when he is forty, to recuperate. I could easily fill another page with his notions; but I forbear. To the looker on, each one of them is half an amusement and half an irritation.

Shaw's gallantries are for the most part non-existent. He says, with some truth, that no man who has any real work in the world has time or money for a pursuit so long and expensive as the pursuit of women. He may possibly have started that protest against the expensiveness and the exactions of beautiful women which is the main theme of his friend, Granville Barker's "Waste" and the "Madras House." Nobody knows his history in this respect, as he is far too correct a person to kiss and tell. To all appearance he is a model husband; and in the various political movements in which his youth was passed there was no scandal about

him. Yet a popular anecdote describes a well known actor-manager as saying one day at rehearsal to an actress of distinguished beauty, "Let us give Shaw a beefsteak and put some red blood into him." "For heaven's sake, don't," she exclaimed: "he is bad enough as it is; but if you give him meat no woman in London will be safe." The gentleman's joke obviously provoked the lady's; and no man can say more than that the truth must be somewhere between them. Anyhow, Shaw's teaching is much more interesting than his personal adventures, if he ever had any. That teaching is unquestionably in very strong reaction against what he has called Nineteenth Century Amorism. He is not one of your suburban Love-is-Enough fanatics. He maintains that chastity is so powerful an instinct that its denial and starvation on the scale on which the opposite impulse has been starved and denied would wreck any civilization. He insists that intellect is a passion; and that the modern notion that passion means only sex is as crude and barbarous as the ploughman's idea that art is simply bawdiness. He points out that art can flourish splendidly when sex is absolutely barred, as it was, for example, in the Victorian literature which produced Dickens, and that painting in Italy and sculpture in Greece were nursed to their highest point within the limits of a religion

and a convention which absolutely barred pornography. He compares Giulio Romano, a frank and shameless pornographer, a pupil of Raphael's, and a more brilliant draughtsman, with Raphael himself, who was so sensitive that though he never painted a draped figure without first drawing it in the nude, he always paid the Blessed Virgin the quaint tribute of a caleçon in his studies of her, and contrived to decorate the villa of a voluptuary with the story of Cupid and Psyche without either shrinking from the uttermost frankness or losing his dignity and essential innocence. Shaw contends that when art passed from the hands of Raphael to those of Giulio it fell into an abyss, and became not only disgusting but dull. For the modern drama, with its eternal triangle and so forth, he claims nothing but that it proves adultery to be the dullest of subjects, and the last refuge of a bankrupt imagination. He wrote "Plays for Puritans" to show how independent he was of such expedients. In "Fanny's First Play" he ridicules the critics who conclude that he has no virility. He demands scornfully whether genuine virility can be satisfied with stories and pictures, and declares that the fleshy school in art is the consolation of the impotent. Yet there are several passages in his writings and dramas which show that he considers that imaginary love plays an important part in civilized life.

In his latest finished play the handsome hero says to a man who is jealous of him, "Do not waste your jealousy on me: the imaginary rival is the dangerous one." In "Getting Married," the lady who refuses to marry because she cannot endure masculine untidiness and the smell of tobacco, hints that her imagination provides her with a series of adventures which beggar reality. Shaw says that the thousand and three conquests of Don Juan consist of three squalid intrigues and a thousand imaginative fictions. He says that every attempt to realize such fictions is a failure; and it may be added that nobody but a man who had tried could have written the third act of *Man and Superman*. In the fourth act of that play, too, the scene in which the hero revolts from marriage and struggles against it without any hope of escape is a poignantly sincere utterance which must have come from personal experience. Shakespeare in treating the same theme through the character of Benedick might conceivably have been making fun of somebody else; but Tanner with all his extravagance is first hand: Shaw would probably not deny it and would not be believed if he did.

Shaw's amazing anti-Shakespeare campaign under my editorship was all the more unexpected because I was one of the few London editors to whom Shakespeare is more than a name. I was saturated with Shakespeare. At the hottest crisis

of the war, if I bought a newspaper to learn the latest news from the front, and my eye caught the name of Hamlet or Falstaff, I would read every word about them before turning to the latest telegrams. That I should be the editor of an attack on Shakespeare of unheard of ferocity was the one thing I should have declared confidently could never possibly occur to me. No name was more sacred to me. What made the adventure odder was, first, that Shaw, who delivered the attack, was as full of Shakespeare as I, and, second, that though we were both scandalized by the sacrilege we were committing, neither of us could honestly alter a word in one of the articles. They were outrageous; but there was nothing to withdraw, nothing to soften, nothing that could be modified without bringing down the whole critical edifice. The explanation is simple enough. Shaw's first shot at Shakespeare was fired in 1894. Ibsen's first broadside on England caught London between wind and water in 1889. Shaw had written his "Quintessence of Ibsenism" in the meantime, and was judging everything on and off the stage by the standard set up by the terrible Norwegian. Many lesser men suffered cruelly by that standard; but Shakespeare was the most conspicuous victim. "It is useless to talk of Shakespeare's depth now," said Shaw: "there is nothing left but his music. Even the famous delineation of

character, the Moliere - Shakespeare - Scott - Dumas *pere* novel, is only a trick of mimicry. Our Bard is knocked out of time: there is not a feature left on his face. Hamlet is a spineless effigy beside Pier Gynt, Imogen a doll beside Nora Helmer, Othello a convention of Italian opera beside Julian." And it was quite true. Only in the Sonnets could we find Shakespeare getting to that dark centre of realization at which Ibsen worked. Now Shaw was not only full of Ibsen, but full of Wagner, of Beethoven, of Goethe, and—curiously—of Bunyan. The English way of being great by flashes: Shakespeare's way, Ruskin's way, and Chesterton's way, without ever following the inspiration up—that enormous disregard of intellectual thoroughness that William Morris put his finger on when he said that Ruskin could say the most splendid things and forget them five minutes after, could not disguise its incoherence from an Irishman. Shaw's favorite saying that an Irishman may like an Englishman better than he likes any Irishman, and may prefer an English cottage to an Irish palace, but that no Irishman can regard the English as an adult race, explains a good deal in his attitude to Shakespeare. "The Irish," he says, "with all their detestable characteristics are at least grown up. They think systematically: they don't stop in the middle of a game of golf to take in the grandeur of thought as if it were a

sunset, and then turn back to their game as the really serious business of their life."

It will be noticed that my portrait of Shaw is both more and less intimate than any other I have penned. More, because Shaw tells the whole world all that there is to be told about himself. Less, because I never sat on a committee with him; and that is the only way to see much of him. Shaw is not really a social man. He never goes anywhere unless he has business there. He pays no calls. Once he was induced by Maurice Baring to go to a bachelors' party of the usual British type, where men of all generations, from Lord Cromer to H. G. Wells, were trying to remember how to behave like undergraduates. "Gentlemen," said Shaw, with deadly contempt for their efforts, "we shall enjoy ourselves very much if only you will not try to be convivial."

He has described me as a Monster; and his ground is that "Frank Harris adores literature with a large L and yet can write: that is, he combines the weakness of the amateur with the strength of a genuine vocation." It is quite true that I am a born Mermaid Taverner: I share with Shakespeare and Doctor Johnson that weakness of the amateur which delights in the feast of reason and the flow of soul among my literary compeers, and my betters if I can tempt them to sit with me. But Shaw declares that he

saved his soul when he came to London by resolving, after his first glance at the Savile Club, that he would never be a literary man or consort with such." "I might have spent my life sitting watching these fellows taking in each other's washing and learning no more of the world than a tic in a typewriter if I had been fool enough," he says. I tried to cure him of this by inviting him to my Saturday Review lunches at the Café Royal; but it was no use. He came a few times, being sincerely interested in the Café, in the waiters, in the prices, in the cookery: in short, in the economics of the place; and he concluded that Harold Frederic and I ate too much meat, and that it was a waste of money to pay Café Royal prices for his own plateful of maccaroni, which he could obtain elsewhere for tenpence. The fact that I paid for it made no difference whatever to him: he objected to a waste of my money just as much as of his own.

I have sometimes wished that a good many other people were equally considerate; but Shaw's consideration amounts to an interference with one's private affairs that is all the more infuriating because its benevolence and sagacity makes it impossible to resent it. One of his hostesses said he was a most dangerous man, and, on being asked how and why (in the hope of eliciting some scandal) explained, "You invite him down to your place because you think he will entertain your guests with his brilliant con-

versation; and before you know where you are he has chosen a school for your son, made your will for you, regulated your diet, and assumed all the privileges of your family solicitor, your housekeeper, your clergyman, your doctor, your dressmaker, your hairdresser, and your estate agent. When he has finished with everybody else, he incites the children to rebellion. And when he can find nothing more to do, he goes away and forgets all about you”.

All attempts to draw him into disinterested social intercourse are futile. If I had wanted to see as much of Shaw as I could easily see of any other man of letters in London, I should have to join his endless committee, when I could have seen him five times a week at least. Our relations as contributor and editor were useless for social purposes: he did not come to the office as often as once a year, and then only when we were in some legal difficulty, when he would hasten to our aid and demonstrate with admirable lucidity that we had not a leg to stand on. He is accessible to everybody, and tells everybody everything without reserve; but the net result is that nobody really knows him or can tell you anything about him.

There is a cutting edge to Shaw that everybody dreads. He has in an extreme degree the mercurial mind that recognizes the inevitable instantly and faces it and adapts itself to it ac-

cordingly. Now there is hardly anything in the world so unbearable as a man who will not cry at least a little over spilt milk, or allow us a few moments murmuring before we admit that it is spilt and done for. Few of us realize how much we soften our losses by wrapping the hard things of life in a veiling atmosphere of sympathies, regret, condolences, caressing little pretences that are none the less sweet because they can never be made good: in short, moral shock absorbers. Shaw neither gives nor takes such quarter. There is a story of an Indian prince whose favorite wife, when banqueting with him, caught fire and was burnt to ashes before she could be extinguished. The Indian prince took in the situation at once, and faced it. "Sweep up your missus," he said to his weeping staff; "and bring in the roast pheasant." That prince was an oriental Shaw. Once, at Westminster Bridge underground station, Shaw slipped at the top of the stairs, and shot down the whole flight on his back, to the horror of the bystanders. But when he rose without the least surprise and walked on as if that were his usual way of negotiating a flight of steps, they burst into an irresistible shriek of laughter. Whether it is a missed train, or a death among his nearest and dearest, he shows this inhuman self-possession. No one has accused him of being a bad son: his relations with his mother were apparently as

perfect as anything of the kind could be; but when she was cremated, Granville Barker, whom he had chosen to accompany him as the sole other mourner, could say nothing to him but "Shaw: you certainly are a merry soul." Shaw was not only full of interest in the process and the ceremony, but full also of a fancy that his mother was looking on at it over his shoulder and sharing his delight at the points on which it appealed to his sense of humor. He is fond of saying that what bereaved people need is a little comic relief, and that it probably explains why funerals are so farcical.

In many ways this mercurial gift serves Shaw's turn very well. He knows much sooner and better than most people when he is in danger and when out of it; and this gives him an appearance of courage when he is really running no risk. He has the same advantage in his sense of the value of money, knowing when it is worth spending and when it is worth keeping; and here again he often appears generous when he is driving a very good bargain. Therefore when he describes himself, as he does, as timid and stingy whilst the man in the street is amazed at his boldness and liberality, it is very hard to decide how far he is capable of facing real danger or making a real sacrifice. He is genuinely free from envy; but how can a man be envious when he pities every other man for not

being George Bernard Shaw? The late Cecil Chesterton has left it on record that when he, as a young nobody, met the already famous Shaw, he was received on terms of the frankest boyish equality. This shows that Shaw makes no mistakes about man and manners; it hardly proves more. All that can be predicted of him by the average man is unexpectedness.

Shaw, therefore, with all his engaging manners and social adroitness, appears as one who does not care what he says, who is callous in some of the most moving situations in life, and whose line can never be foreseen, no matter what the subject is. That is not a receipt for a reassuring or popular personality, though it may be for a provocative one. Granted that it may be a quite misleading effect produced by his excellent quality of brain, none the less it explains why "he has not an enemy in the world; and none of his friends like him." The most famous single passage in his dramatic work, Caesar's "He who has never hoped can never despair," is praised for its fineness, its originality. But no one has ever felt sure that his inspiration is not infernal rather than divine. Compare it with the now intolerably hackneyed quotation which endears Shaw to the Nonconformist conscience: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you

are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish little selfish clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to make you happy." There is no smell of brimstone about this; but ask any of Shaw's friends whether it did not surprise them much more as coming from him that "He who has never hoped can never despair," and you will soon learn which of the two utterances is considered the more Shavian by those who know the author.

I shall not attempt to carry the portrait any further. Shaw is almost a hopeless subject, because there is nothing interesting to be said about him that he has not already said about himself. Germany, France, England and America have each produced books about him. Henderson has read Shaw from end to end, interviewed him, and ascertained all the facts; whilst Gilbert Chesterton apparently regards Shaw as a sort of starry influence that never touched the earth or dipped a pen in the ink. Julius Bab sees in Shaw the Arch Protestant, at home in the country of Luther. McCabe, still a priest to the backbone in spite of his defiant apostacy, argues as a priest does, but from the opposite end. Shaw is not a materialist atheist; therefore argues McCabe, he must be a man who will steal spoons if he gets the chance. Holbrook Jackson's little volume is still one of the best: he knew Shaw

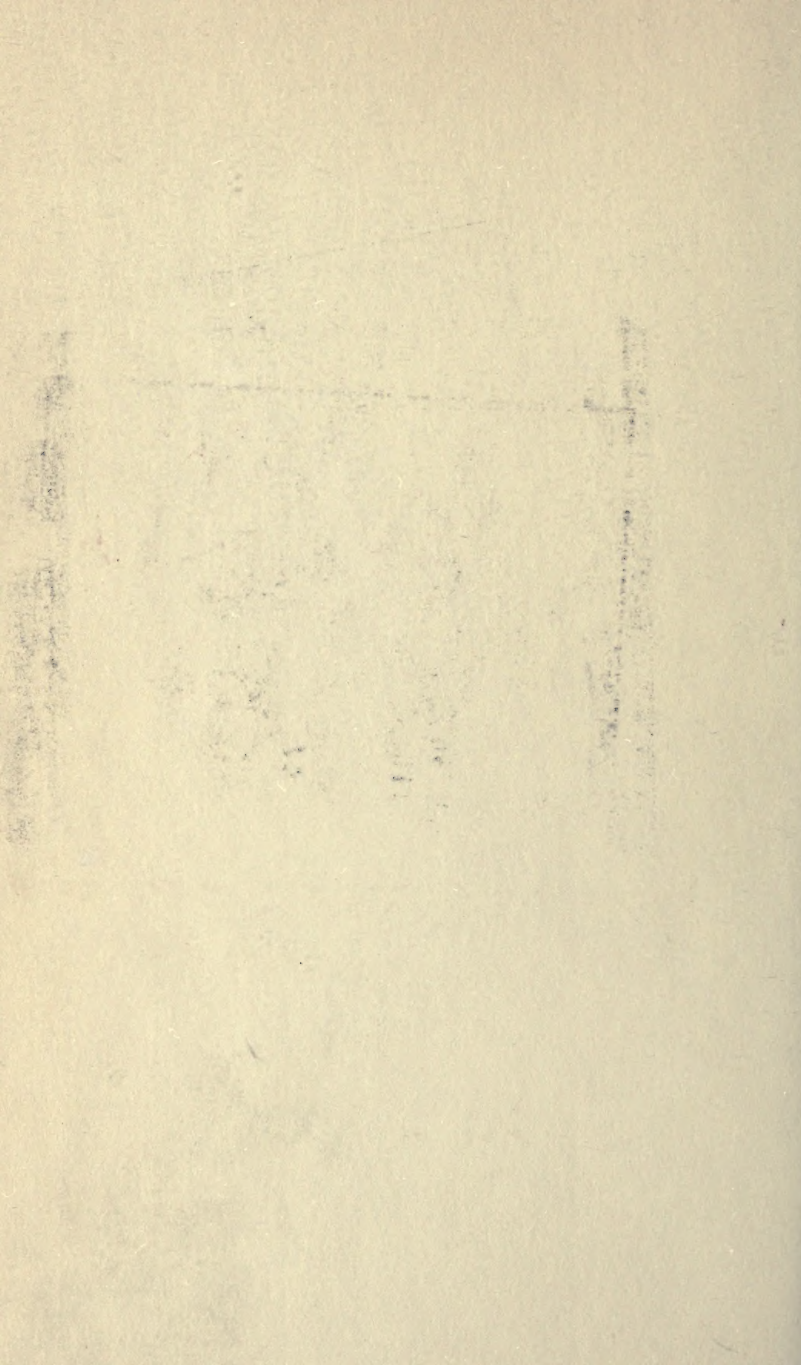
in his Fabian entourage, and worked with him. Professor O'Bolger threatens us with revelations as to the private life of the Shaw family, and promises to show that the young gentleman in "Misalliance" who explains that he had three fathers in a perfectly blameless *menage à quatre*, is Shaw himself. Shaw prefers Chesterton's book because, he says, "of its magnificent innocence and generosity towards me, and its general wisdom and interest." Cestre's book is a very competent piece of French criticism, of the kind that might be expected in a country where Shaw's works are in the official educational lists of books to be studied for examinations in English literature.

But I know better than to attempt to pick the bones of a man who has already preyed on himself so thoroughly that there is nothing left worth the lifting. I have, however, noticed something that has escaped not only his biographers but himself. Neither he nor they have ever attempted to explain Wilde's epigram. Shaw has been enormously abused, almost always stupidly and maliciously. He has also been idealized as a prophet and adored as a saint. Between those extremes there has been a good deal of excellent writing about him, by very able reviewers like Gilbert Murray and Desmond McCarthy, which show a high appreciation of him, and an anxious desire not to be classed with his detractors.

Wilde debarred himself carefully from all suspicion of underrating Shaw. The words with which I began this essay show that I myself insist on vindicating my taste and judgment in this respect before letting myself go about him. But why this anxiety. Why not take it for granted that this eminent man, who said with such placid confidence to William Archer, "I shall be a panjandrum of literature for the next three hundred years," is entitled to his place in the Pantheon without question. Why not go even further, and say, "Others abide our question: thou art free!" I can only answer that though in his amazing complacency he certainly does not abide our question, he is very far from being free of it. He is violently resented and detested as well as admired and liked. Yet he has no vices; his manners are not repulsive; a little real malice would positively heighten his geniality. The problem is to find a perfectly consistent character (and Shaw's character is almost mechanically consistent) that can produce these contrary effects. Nobody has yet tried to do this: his defenders have ignored the dislike: his assailants have denied his qualities and invented faults which do not exist. I have made no attempt to sit in judgment or to play the chivalrous friend. I have sketched the man's lines as they appear; and though the resultant figure is free from deformity, yet there is some-

thing in it that human nature cannot easily bear. It is odd that I, who feel myself to be a very human person—all too human perhaps, as Nietzsche has it—should have been called a monster by the only man of my time who, though humane to a degree, is never quite human. Is he not himself a monster; a priceless monster certainly, but still one who could give us all a shudder, and knew it, by saying "Imagine a world inhabited exclusively by Bernard Shaws!" It was only a trick, of course: a world of anybodies in particular would be unbearable. It was perhaps only a plagiarism of Napoleon's saying that when he died the world would utter a great "Ouf!" of relief. But there was something in it for all that; and what that something was I have perhaps made you feel if I could not make you understand, not understanding myself.

THE END



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